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JANUARY 1997

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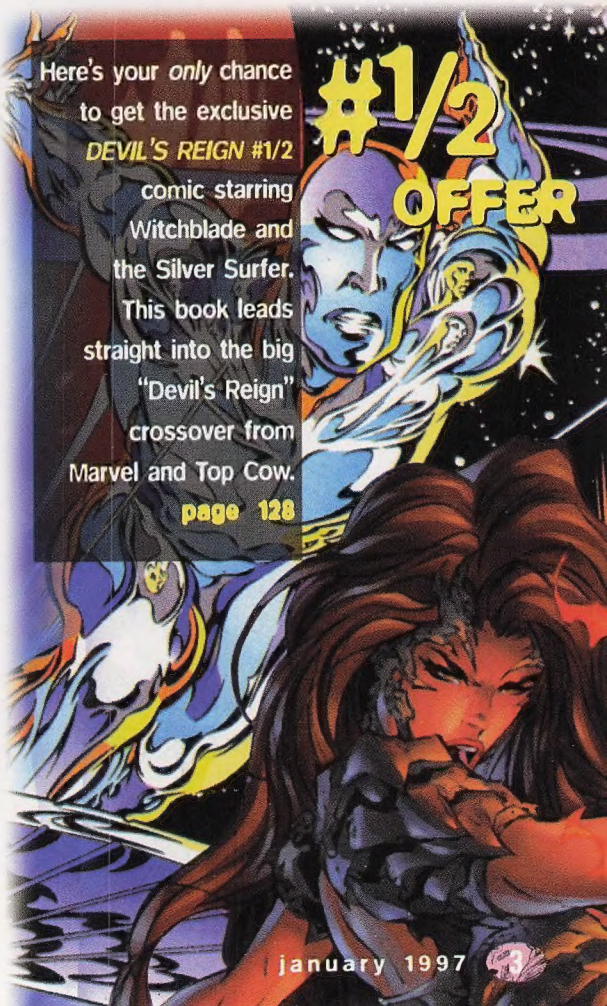

Here's your *only* chance to get the exclusive *DEVIL'S REIGN #1/2* comic starring Witchblade and the Silver Surfer. This book leads straight into the big "Devil's Reign" crossover from Marvel and Top Cow. **page 128**

"HEY, DOES THIS LOOK SWOLLEN TO YOU?"

LEND ME YOUR YEAR

I have to admit it. This is my favorite issue of the year. Do you know that shortly after the Year-Ender hits the stands, we're already planning the next Year-Ender?

In the Year-Ender, we get a chance to expand everything—more articles, more news, more contests, more of *everything*.

This year, we've got a few things we've never done before, such as the holiday gift tags (sure to get lots of use), the first character-crossover #1/2 offer (Witchblade and Silver Surfer), the first *Wizard* cover by hot new talent Kevin Lau and a first look at what's in store for your favorite comics in 1997.

Some things you won't want to miss in this issue are a Q&A with X-Men writer Scott Lobdell, expanded looks at *Kingdom Come* and *Astro City*, a look at the Top 10 stories of 1996 and what the future holds for 1997, and a story for every fanboy—how to get a job in the comics industry.

We've seen many new, quality titles come to the market this year, and the publishers had a full year to retrench and work on their publishing plans. The publishers also created a few big events which helped to fuel lots of consumer interest. This all bodes well for next year. You'll find my '97 predictions here next month.

We've got a great issue planned—I know you'll like it. In the meantime, sit back and enjoy. There's tons of stuff to look at and read.

See ya,

Gareb S. Shamus

P.S. Make sure you get the *Wizard* Poster Special. You won't find a less-expensive way to decorate your room. And make sure to fill out a copy of the *Wizard* Fan Award ballot. Your vote counts.

P.P.S. The Sci-Fi Invasion is coming—watch out...

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Stuff you don't ever read...

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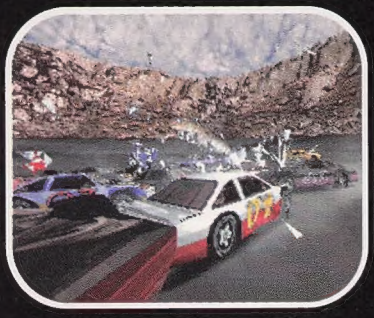

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MAGIC WORDS

Dear Not-So-All-Knowing Wizard People,

I recently purchased issue #61 of the magazine you call *Wizard*. A magazine, I might add, that I have come to enjoy. I have just recently started my comic collecting ways again, and rely on *Wizard* to keep me up to date with the stuff I don't buy and the stuff behind the scenes. Sounds like a great beginning to a letter? Well, don't get excited.

I started going through the issue in question and came across the infamous letters page, where I've gotten regular laughs for the last few months. One letter caught my eye. It had a picture of Spider-Man above it. I started reading the letter. A guy gets a tattoo of Spider-Man on his left shoulder and inquires about the artist. Mr. McLauchlin replies, and his reply quite frankly offended me.

There is nothing—absolutely nothing—wrong with someone having a tattoo on his or her body. I have four tattoos, all of which I am proud to wear. I am not embarrassed in the least to show my artwork to an interested onlooker. Mr. McLauchlin tells the letter writer to "get a dose of common sense"? How about he gets in touch with a tradition that has been used by people all over the world for quite a few years (since the dawn of time, to be exact)! Pain is most certainly present when getting a tattoo, but when you leave with the artwork that the artist has imprinted on your body, you leave with a marking that joins you to thousands of others among us. Getting a tattoo doesn't take away from your own natural beauty. It adds to the beauty of the human body. And as for Mr. McLauchlin's hepatitis remark, tattoo shops are as clean, if not cleaner, than hospitals.

So here's a word of advice to Jim McLauchlin: Stick to something you are good at, like replying to letters, and keep your nose out of things that you have no idea about!

Jeff Graham
Parts Unknown

I thought that's what I was doing: Answering a letter. By the way, I have a hard-and-fast policy against running letters from writers who don't identify themselves by name and city. In this case, Jeff comes from "parts unknown" because I lost the envelope his letter came in. My fault. Hoo boy, did this turn out to be a can of worms! I got a flood of mail from tattoo fans defending their tats and basically telling me I'm a giant ass. So, in the interest of fairness, I set out to give a tattooed comic creator equal time. Ever try to find a tattooed comic writer or artist? It ain't easy. I thought I was on the right track with Astro City penciller Brent Anderson, but he told me he only had an involuntary tattoo from when he accidentally poked himself with a pen. Finally, after a lot of calls and a little luck, I hit upon the tattooed Anina Bennett, co-creator of the current Dark Horse and future Image title Heartbreakers. She even has a tattooed character by the name of Queenie. Take it away, Anina:

"Why is Jim so upset about tattoos? Sure, they hurt. Sure, superhero tats are gaudy. But as long as no one's forcing Jim to get inked, I don't see what's got his knickers in such a twist. I have a few small tattoos myself. Neither Queenie nor I have contracted hepatitis, since we only patronize clean, professional establishments. And we both get nothing but compliments on our tattoos. So there."

Well, there you go. Thank you, Jeff Graham, for raising my consciousness. However, I must take issue with your historical accuracy. Tattooing has been around since "the dawn of time, to be exact"? That would predate ink, needles, even human existence and the domestication of the dog. I don't think it goes back quite that far.

Bottom line? You wanna get a tattoo? Go right ahead. No skin off my ass. Literally.

Dear Wizard,

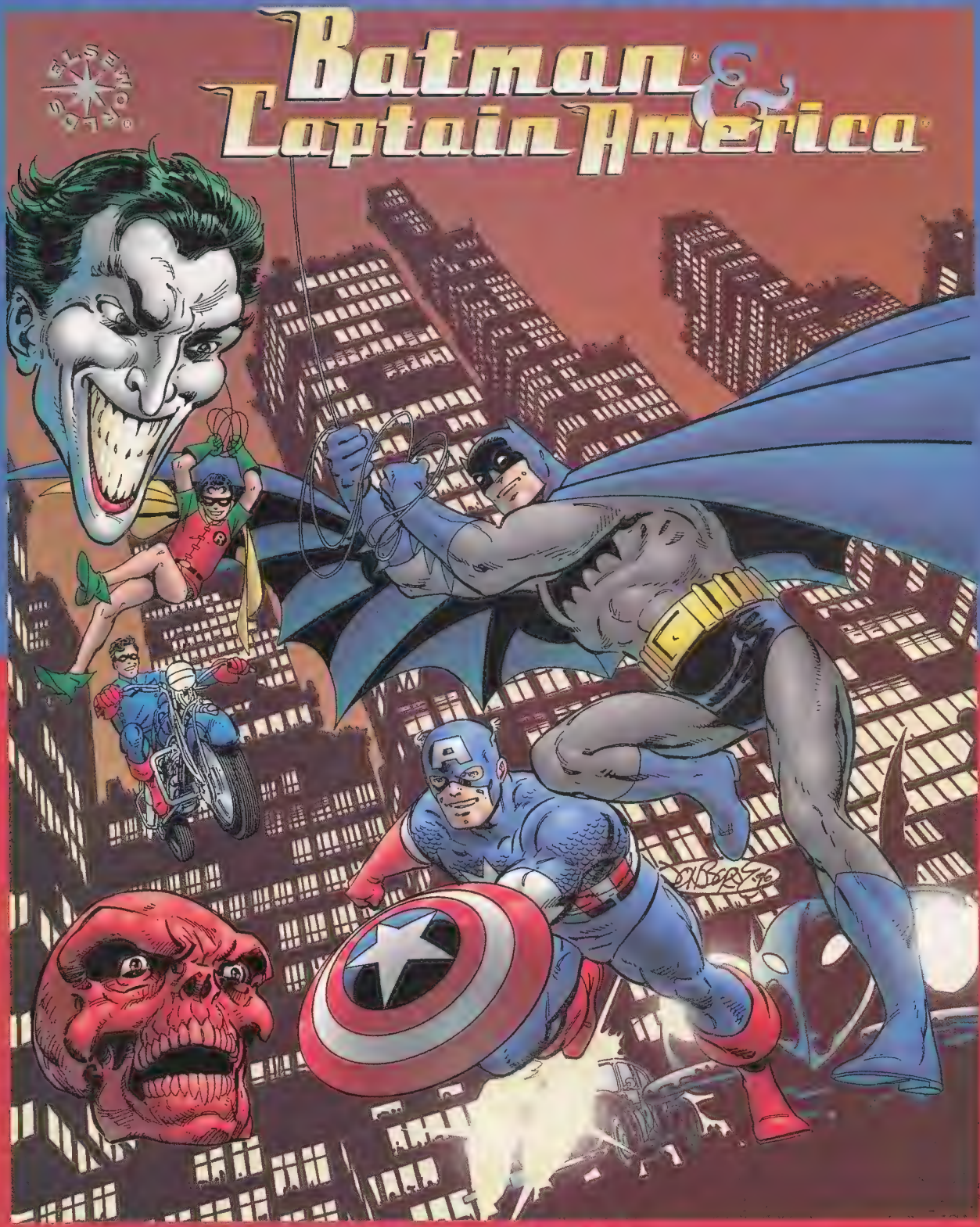
I think it would be really cool if Clarice Ferguson (a.k.a. Blink) would return to Marvel Comics! Maybe she's not really dead. Maybe something happened, like her power interacted with the Phalanx technology, sending her into a strange dimension (Possibly the same "pocket dimension" as the Avengers and the Fantastic Four?) and maybe she can come back after years of honing her powers. Cool, huh?

Robert Brandt
Stites, ID

Well, Marvel does have a track record of

THESE LETTERS ARE GUARANTEED HAND-PICKED FOR FRESHNESS

THIS IS THE BIG ONE!



BY JOHN BYRNE

ONE-SHOT SLAMMING INTO STORES IN DECEMBER

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bringing dead characters back. Do they have such plans for Blink? We asked Marvel spokesman John Cerilli, who said, "Blink is dead. Period. Or maybe that should actually be a comma there. Or maybe even a question mark." They ain't sayin' much, but Marvel may bring Blink back.

Photo by Al Ortego

Dear Wizard,

I have some questions on Peter David.

1) Has he ever been to or ever considered visiting Staten Island?

2) How many novels has he written?

3) Why are his novels *Howling Mad* and *Knight Life* so damn hard to find? I want them, hot dammit!

4) Has he ever written any episodes for "Star Trek"? If not, why?

5) Please ask him to write another "Deep Space Nine" novel. His first one ruled, man!

Florence McCarthy
Brooklyn, NY
TheDarkAge@aol.com

For answers, we went straight to the man himself. Ladies and gentlemen, Peter David:

1) I have driven through Staten Island far more times than I can count, usually on my way between New York City and New Jersey. I think I've done a store appearance or two there in the past, but I haven't been out there recently. If a Staten Island comic store wants me to come out, they can arrange it through Marvel or DC.

2) No idea off the top of my head exactly how many novels I've written. Counting "Trek" novels, original novels, movie novelizations, books written under the pen name "David Peters" and comic-related novels, I'd say I've written well over 30 by this point.

3) Both Howling Mad and Knight Life have been out of print for some years. I wouldn't mind getting them both back into print. Write your favorite publisher and ask them to pick up the publishing rights (But don't bother with Ace, since they're the ones who let the rights lapse in the first place.). Just so you know, a novella-length sequel to Howling Mad appears in a new anthology called Otherweyrs. Since that's new, it's probably still on the stands.

4) I wrote one story for "Star Trek" which was bought, paid for and then killed. Since then, I've far preferred working on "Space Cases," the Nickelodeon series I co-created with Bill Mumy, which airs Saturdays at 8:30 p.m. EST. Plus, I wrote two episodes for the second season of "Babylon 5." Whether I write any more "B5"s is up to the show's creator, Joe Straczynski.

5) I'm one of three writers on a "DS9" novel scheduled for the first half of 1997. It's called Wrath of the Prophets, and I co-wrote it with Michael Jan Friedman and Bob Greenberger.

Paul Schiraldi

Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Dear Jim,

To be honest, I couldn't care less about arguments on who's strongest, smartest or even who has the biggest boobs. But when you start talking about writer/artist dream teams and the books they should be on, as in *Wizard* #61, I want in on it!

The real fun is in putting great creators on projects they've never worked on and imagining the results. Here goes...

Title	Writer	Penciler	Inker
Swamp Thing	Alan Moore	Graham Ingels	Simon Bisley
Warlord	Barry W.-Smith	Barry W.-Smith	Barry W.-Smith
X-Factor	Marv Wolfman	Art Adams	Terry Austin
X-Men	Chris Claremont	Michael Golden	Paul Smith
Vampirella	Garth Ennis	Jim Balent	Jim Balent
Conan	Neil Gaiman	Simon Bisley	Simon Bisley
The X-Files	Neil Gaiman	D. Mazzucchelli	Klaus Janson
Thor	Roy Thomas	Moebius	Moebius
Archie	Gilbert Hernandez	Humberto Ramos	Mike Wieringo
Superman	Kurt Busiek	Joe Quesada	Jimmy Palmiotti

At the very least, an interesting off-the-cuff listing. Hey, if EC's master of the macabre is still kickin', wouldn't his teaming with Moore and Bisley on Swampy be a kick? Could Windsor-Smith do for *Warlord* what he did for *Conan* back in the '70s? Chris Claremont owns the X-Men! And Terry Austin is the man! Michael Golden's turn on the X-Men in *Avengers Annual* #10 and *Marvel Fanfare* #1 showed what this great artist can do with these characters. I think Paul Smith's clean style would mesh well with Golden's wild one. Vampi in the sick and sexy hands of Ennis and Balent? I shudder at the thought. Wouldn't you like to see Gaiman wrap his chops around Robert E. Howard's mythology with that sicko Bisley in tow? I would. Wouldn't you like to see Gaiman wrap his chops around Chris Carter's mythology with that sicko Mazzucchelli in tow? I would. Moebius on Thor? Yup. Did ya see his work on the *Silver Surfer* one-shot? Just imagine what he could do in Asgard. Archie? Now I'm getting kooky.

Thought-provoking, eh? Even if you have to edit the hell out of it, I hope it sees the light of day.

Robert Young
Isle of Palms, SC

Well, I did have to edit the hell out of it to make it fit. Robert sent in 30-some titles. Big dreams. By the way, I couldn't find out for sure if Graham Ingels was still among the living, so I left him in this list. Anyone out there with definitive information on Ingels? Drop me a line.

Dear Wizard,

Your fifth anniversary issue predicted that novelists would be the comic writers of the future. I've got some ideas for good writer and title match-ups:

Daredevil—John Grisham. Legal savvy and suspenseful hornhead action!

Captain America—Tom Clancy. Military conspiracies and patriotism galore!

Vampirella—Anne Rice. An obvious match. Who else can write vampires with integrity?

X-Men—Michael Crichton. The guy can tell stories about anything under the sun, including muties.

Spawn—Dean Koontz. It takes reading one of his books to know how much he knows about evil tendencies. His images of Hell are downright scary.

Spider-Man—Stephen King. Author of *Arachnophobia*. What? He didn't write that? Well, we know what to expect from the master of suspense, and, as a special added bonus, he has no novels about clones.

So whaddaya think?

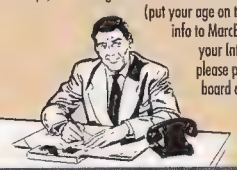
Joey Saure
Los Angeles, CA

If you ask me, we weren't really as much predicting that novelists would become comic writers as we were wishing that novelists would become comic writers. It seems that many of today's comic writers grew up on nothing but...comics. And that can be bad. Once a pool of talent starts to feed on itself, it devours itself pretty quickly. Having some influence and talent come in from another area helps keep things fresh. The moral of the story: Don't be afraid to read some of those big books that don't have any pictures.

By the way, I haven't read X-Men in about nine years, but I would read a Michael Crichton X-Men.

Hey! It's Pen Pals

Send your name, address, age, gender and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address on the last page of "Magic Words" (put your age on the envelope) or e-mail your info to MarcEditor@aol.com. If you want your Internet address listed instead, please post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look under "Wizard Message Boards").



P E N P A L S

Jeremy Lund
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Burton, MI 48519
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Castroville, CA 95012
Likes: *Ren & Stimpy, Spawn, The Maxx*

Kenny Hemphill Jr.
Age: 15 Sex: Male
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Pearl River, LA 70452
Likes: *Spawn, Wolverine, Beavis & Butt-Head*

Jeffrey Klawitter II
Age: 16 Sex: Male
40 Mark Lane R.R. 6
Bloomington, IL 61704
Likes: *Spawn, Pitt, X-Men*

Belinda Fellows
Age: 16 Sex: Female
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Clayton, NC 27520
Likes: All X-titles, *Wolverine*

Dana Trease
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Pleasant Dale, NE 68423
Likes: All X-titles, Acclaim titles, *Gen*[13]

Keith Baker
Age: 11 Sex: Male
2609 Mossy Rock Cove
Memphis, TN 38133
Likes: *Wolverine, X-Men, Superman*

Dear Wizard Guys,
What in blazes is a "light year?" Just wondering.

Darvin Razal
Riverside, CA

Many people think that a light year is a measure of time, but it's actually a measure of distance. A light year is the distance that light travels in one year. If the speed of light is roughly 186,000 miles a second (and it is), then a light year is approximately 5,880,000,000,000 miles

Dear All-mighty Wizards,
1) How many different comic titles has Joe Madureira illustrated?
2) Why did Jeff Smith (and *Bone*) move to Image Comics?
3) What was the first comic called and when did it come out?
4) What size shoe does Creed wear?

Trevor Smith
Winslow, ME

1) As near as we can tell, about 12. These include a run on* Uncanny X-Men, *Marvel's* Deadpool *mini-series,* Thor Annual *#19,* Vanguard *#3, a cover on* Spectacular Spider-Man *#213 and something called* Trauma Corps *from Anubis Press. This information was gleaned from the 1996 Comic Book Index, a great book by a publisher called Alternate Concepts. Wanna get a copy of the Index? See point 4 two letters down.

2) We asked Jeff Smith, who said, "Uh...I don't think I was in class that day. Maybe my body was taken over by an alien seed pod. Actually, it just seemed like a good publishing idea."

3) Oh, boy. Another easy question with a tough answer.* The Yellow Kid in McFadden Flats, *published in 1897, reprinted previous newspaper comic strips in a book format, and is thus occasionally referred to as the first "comic book."

However,* Funnies on Parade, *published as a freebie giveaway for Procter & Gamble customers in 1933, introduced the standard size and format we have come to know comics by. Even though the issue contains all reprint material, most would agree that it is indeed the first comic. And just to muddy the waters a bit, our friends at Comic Cavalcade tell us that* Detective Dan, *a recent discovery and another 1933 release, is now recognized as the first newsstand comic containing original material.

4) Big. I think the kid just laces up a pair of skis, but I'm not sure.

Dear Wizards,
I read in *Wizard* #60 that Mark Bagley will be leaving *Amazing Spider-Man* with issue #415. What will he be working on next?

Cameran Keepper
Lebanon, IL

Thunderbolts. ***It's a new title featuring an all-new team that will take the place of many of the heroes lost in the battle with Onslaught (and sent to the "Heroes Reborn" world).*** Thunderbolts ***launches in February, but you can take a look at them now by checking out the article in last month's*** Wizard ***or picking up their first appearance in*** Incredible Hulk ***#449.***

Dear Wizard,
I have been reading your magazine for about eight months now and it has been very helpful. I was hoping you could help me even further by supplying answers to the following questions.
1) In "Wizardry" (or "How an Issue of *Wizard* is Made in 22 Easy Steps") in issue #60, I noticed that everyone has a bunch of action figures on their desks. What do you guys do with all of them?
2) How many "Elseworlds" titles has DC Comics published?
3) What does the "DC" in DC Comics stand for?
4) Where can I get DC merchandise like T-shirts, statues or posters if none of the local comic shops carry them?
5) Does Marvel have a current catalog out? If so, how can I get one?
I hope you can find answers to all my questions.

David Lago
Goose Creek, SC

Heck, I've been writing for this magazine for about 33 months now and I have some answers.

1) Uh, we pretty much just set them up and have them look pretty. However, it is reputed that they come alive at night and put extra, unnecessary, commas, in all of our proofs.

2) Even DC doesn't know. There have been approximately 15 "Elseworlds" stand-alone projects, plus all of DC's 1994 annuals. So you figure there are probably about 40 to 50.

3) It stands for "Detective Comics," the company's flagship title.

4) Special-order them from your local comic shop. Most of these items are available for order and most shops are very willing to order specific items for you. You will probably have to put a deposit down on a special order, but it's worth it to get something you really want.

PENPALS

Brandon Booth
Age: 11 Sex: Male
4958 Almayo Ct.
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Likes: All Star Wars titles, *Venom*, *Beavis & Butt-Head*

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Likes: Peter David titles, *Sandman*

Olivette Andrea Felix
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Kelli M. Barnett
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Likes: *X-Men*, *Daredevil*, *Dungeons & Dragons*

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SIEGE

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Siege. Beginning in January from WildStorm Productions and Image Comics. Look for the game from GTE Entertainment in April.

Check out these web sites:
http://www.wildstorm.com and
http://www.im.gte.com/siege
for more information

5) Yep. It's called **Mega Marvel** *and lists all their products for a given month. Again, inquire at your local comic shop.*

Dear Wizard,
I've been watching the "Super Friends" show on the Cartoon Network and I am a bit puzzled. I recognize all the standard DC heroes on the show like Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman and the Flash. But there are some heroes I haven't heard of. Who the heck are Firestorm, Samurai, Apache Chief, Black Vulcan and El Dorado?

Mark Estrella
Boston, MA
Moochini@aol.com

Firestorm is another standard DC hero. Black Vulcan is based on DC Comics' Black Lightning. El Dorado, Samurai and Apache Chief are seen in the cartoon only. As near as anyone can tell, Dorado, Samurai and 'Chief were added by the network to get a better mix of ethnicity and different cultures on the show.

Dear Wizard,
How come the rock musicians KISS haven't made a guest appearance in a *Lobo* comic? They look like they could be the Main Man's long-lost brothers or fifth cousins or something. Then they could all go on a big killing rampage.

Joe Miller
Brooklyn Park, MN

Might be fun. But sez Marvel's John Cerilli: "Forget about Lobo, Joe. KISS will be getting it on in* KISSNATION. *The book is scheduled for release in KISS tour cities late in '96, with a national release slated for early 1997.* KISSNATION *continues the mighty Marvel connection to the band which began with two KISS comic specials—one in 1976 and the other in 1978."

Hey Wizard,
Do you have any idea when Kevin Smith's "Chasing Amy" is due out? I loved his last two movies and I recommend them to all my friends.

Ryan Crowder
Baroda, MI

"Chasing Amy" will premiere at a few selected winter film festivals and is slated for a general release in February, 1997. The film features cameo appearances by comic creators Mike Allred, Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti. Quesada and Palmiotti talk about monkey butts when they're on screen. No kidding.

Dear Wizard,
Are comics ever going to get cheaper? When I first started collecting comics they cost about a buck-fifty. Now, almost any comic you see costs at least two bucks. What's next? I'm surprised they haven't tried printing comics on sheets of gold and selling them for 50 bucks a pop.

Adam Traum
Sanibel, FL
Bgddypunk@aol.com

Uh, they have. In the fall of 1996, Marvel solicited* Onslaught: Marvel Universe *and* Onslaught: X-Men *gold editions. The comics were billed as having 22-karat gold-coated covers and were limited to editions of 2,500 pieces each. Cost to retailers? 50 bucks, which means retail should be about $75.

Dear Wizard,
All the way through the "Onslaught" issues in Marvel Comics, Uatu the Watcher kept poppin' up and observing events and telling the readers what was going on. He even appeared to introduce the Captain America story in the *Wizard*-offer *Heroes Reborn* #1/2. He did all this despite the fact that he was kicked out of the Watcher's Club in *Fantastic Four* #400 for continually interfering in happenings on Earth, because he was only supposed to do is watch. So what's he doing in these comics? How did he get reinstated?

Mike Ferraro
West Islip, NY

It's really not that hard. He just had to stay after class and write "I will not interfere in the affairs of humankind again" 100 times on the board. Then they sent him home with a note to his mom stating that Uatu had been a bad Watcher. He was sent to bed without any supper. He said 10 "Hail Marys." Now he's back the club now and he swears he's gonna keep his nose in his own business.

Dear Wizard,
Check out the cover to *Astro City* #4. Winged Victory is seen as a reflection in a bus window, flying with a villain in tow. That villain is the spitting image of Astro City creator Kurt Busiek. Is it Busiek? Was this done on purpose? Or is it just a coincidence? Help me out here!

Stephen Ward
Huntsville, AL

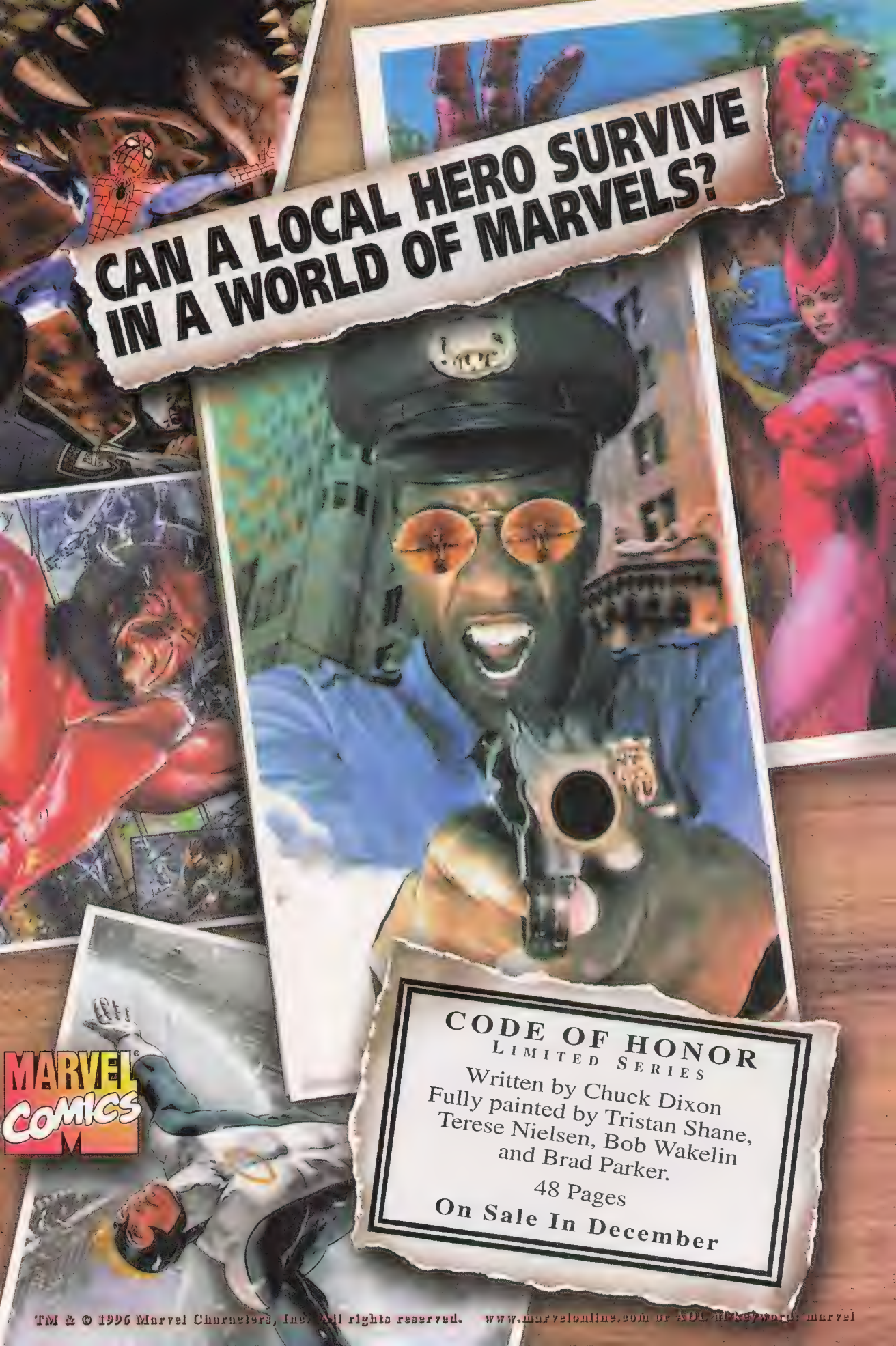
We got in touch with Astro City police department Captain Ann Huntington Busiek, who told us that when the criminal in question was processed down at the station, he was indeed found out to be Kurt Busiek. "It was intentional. In fact, interior artist Brent Anderson and cover artist Alex Ross are also being hauled away by Winged Victory. Alex is the one with the glasses and Brent is the one with the ponytail. All three also appeared in* Astro City *#3, as the friends of 'Eyes,' the man who found out Jack-in-the-Box's secret identity."

All three were released from custody after posting bail. At trial, all three were convicted of conspiracy to create comic books. Busiek and Ross were fined $500 each and received suspended sentences. Brent Anderson is on the lam and is rumored to be hiding out in the Savage Land.

Hey,
Do you guys get chicks in your line of work? How 'bout love letters? Maybe death threats?

Neil Barton
Ramona, CA

Chicks? Nah. We get guys. After the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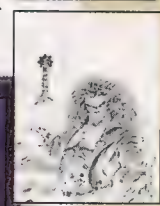
LETTER ART

Fans who got their letter art printed this month will each receive an *Evil Ernie* #-1 mini-comic signed by Justiniano and *Evil Ernie* #1, a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff, and a funky *Wizard* cap! The creator of the best envelope wins the issue, cap and issues, plus an original Justiniano sketch! (Thanks, Chaos!, for the goodies!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address on the *back* of your envelope.

CHAOS! COMICS

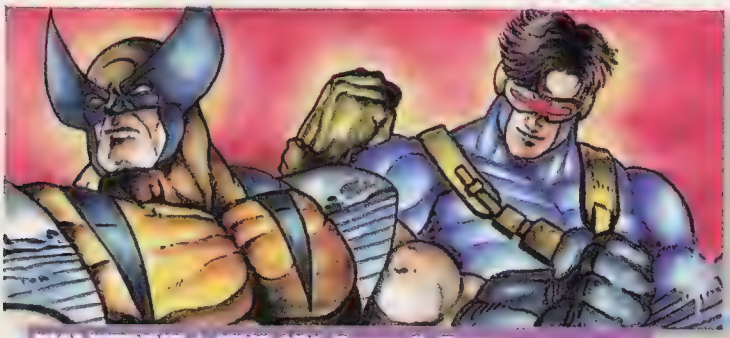
THE PRIZE



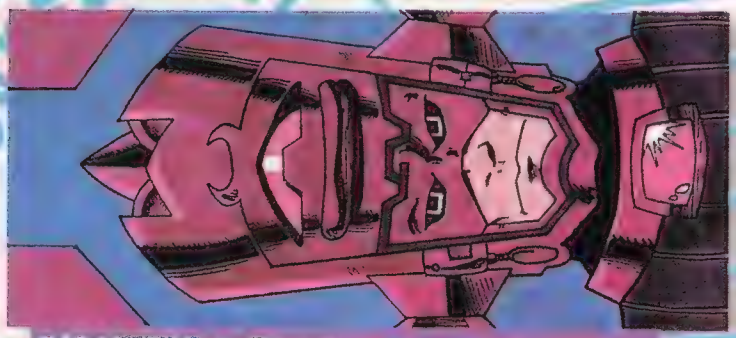
envelope of the month

JOKER Rob Quincy

THE TICK, ARTHUR & CHAINSAW VIGILANTE Brendan Jansen



WOLVERINE & CYCLOPS Donny G. Kazuma



GALACTUS Dave Bjorgen

aforementioned "Wizardry" in issue #60, featuring some photos of the lovely and talented Arlene So, Arlene received quite a few lovey-dovey notes from potential suitors. The men of the staff got nothing. I chalk it up to the fact that only a small percentage of or audience is female. 'Course, I guess we are kinda funny-lookin' too.

Oh, yeah—and I got a couple of death threats from tattoo people this month.

Dear Wizard,

I have a question that's been bugging me since I first saw "Star Wars." How did Carrie Fisher get the hair on the side of her head to look like donuts? I've never been able to figure it out.

Kevin White
Fayetteville, NC
SgTomServo@aol.com

They're not donuts, silly boy. They're cinnamon rolls. She picked 'em up at a local bakery on Dagobah and epoxy-glued 'em to the sides of her head. The rest, as they say, is history.

Just as I am history. I'm putting myself back into cold storage for the next 30 days. Until next month, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Jim McLauchlin is mad for jigs and reels and drinks big, dirty glasses of stout.

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SHIPPING TOPPS 3i DECEMBER

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'KINGDOM COME'

Monthly Title, Hardcover Reprint Slated

Hero of dozens diagnosed with 40-pound tapeworm. "Pie! I need more pie!!" screamed once-mighty, ever-lovin' Thing.

Humanoid wad of cookie dough spotted at local comic con. "Hey...that thing's got a big ass," commented startled fan.

Galactus' son Eugene arrives on Earth. "Wolverine was the first to fall," sobbed a grief-stricken Jean Grey. "And then that...that thing took his temperature with Iceman!"

Come 1997, DC expands its kingdom. Based upon the 1996 hit mini-series ***Kingdom Come***, DC Comics has announced a new ongoing monthly title, a hardcover reprint with an additional 12 pages of story and a novelization with almost 50 percent new material all to be released in 1997.

Returning to the project that he wrote and co-created, **Mark Waid** will write the ongoing monthly series titled ***Kingdom***, which is tentatively set to debut in the summer of 1997. Directly based upon the storyline in *Kingdom Come*, *Kingdom* will serve as a prequel to the critically acclaimed mini-series and will take place directly within current DC continuity. **Alex Ross** will act as an advisor to the series and, in addition, will paint the covers. Meanwhile, **Gene Ha** will undertake the role as interior artist, according to Waid.

"It is pretty neat to have my own sandbox to play with," said Waid. "A series like this puts a ticking clock on the entire DC Universe. Are we actually headed towards the events of *Kingdom Come*? Are we going to turn what was an 'Elseworlds' into the real thing?"

Kingdom will examine the characters exclusive to *Kingdom Come*—like **Magog**—and their emerging place in the realm of the DC Universe. However, Waid also plans to use the modern-day **Superman**, **Batman** and **Wonder Woman** throughout the series. Because the story will be set in present DC continuity, Waid states that he will be unable to drastically alter Superman's life, but maintains that the stories will have some effect on other DC titles.

"Since it's set in the present day and in continuity, we can't do anything Earth-shattering with Superman since he has his own book," said Waid. "The idea is to take certain characters and give you Mark Waid, Alex Ross and Gene Ha's take on them."

In addition to the new series, DC also plans to reprint the *Kingdom Come* mini-series in a hardcover book that includes a new four-page **New Gods** sequence and a new eight-page epilogue that will take place in the Planet Krypton restaurant. The reprint is tentatively scheduled for an April 1997 release.

"If you bought all four issues, you have the whole story. Think of this as director's cut material," said Waid. "The New Gods thing is simply an expansion because Alex wanted to paint the New Gods. And the eight-page epilogue is a winding-down with nice moments in it."

Lastly, a *Kingdom Come* prose novelization is currently set to be released in November 1997. Outlined by Waid and Ross, the novel will be written by **Elliot S. Maggin** (writer of the novels *Last Son of Krypton* and *Miracle Monday*), who Waid cites as one of his biggest inspirations. "Elliot shaped my vision of Superman more than any other person ever has," said Waid. "That's why [my portion of] *Kingdom Come* is dedicated to Elliot."

The novel will not be a straight adaptation of the comic book series. Containing almost 50 percent new material, it will also showcase an Alex Ross cover and eight new Ross illustrations—four black-and-white drawings and four painted book plates. "It's not just a matter of a weak adaptation of a movie or a cheap knock-off paperback," said Waid. "It is a novel in and of itself."

■ *Matthew Senreich*

ahead

'HEROES REBORN' CROSSOVER!

'X-MAN' IN '97!

TREK THEME RIDE!

AND COMPANY UPDATES!

Cable Crashes 'Heroes Reborn' Crossover

The "**Heroes Reborn**" Universe is established, now get ready for its first-ever crossover.

"Heroes Reborn" starts its first major crossover event in February that begins in ***Fantastic Four* #6**, and runs through ***The Avengers* #6** and ***Iron Man* #6**, before ending in ***Captain America* #6**. The story arc, plotted by **Jim Lee**, **Rob Liefeld**, **Scott Lobdell** and **Jeph Loeb**, will see **Iron Man** joining the Avengers, as well as "show the first contact and the first knowledge that the heroes [who are presumed dead from this summer's *Onslaught: Marvel Universe*] are alive," said Loeb. "**Cable** will be guest starring in the crossover."

Entitled "Industrial Revolution," the month-long crossover features Iron Man's decision to join the Avengers. The story focuses on the aftermath of *The Avengers* #4 and #5 in which a **Loki**-possessed **Hulk** attacks Avengers Island. Avengers Island will get destroyed in the battle and draw Tony Stark/Iron Man into the supergroup. "Tony feels responsible for creating the Hulk and carries around the burden of the situation," said Liefeld. "So the aftermath of the battle will see Iron Man join the Avengers, causing the Avengers to break off from the government and **S.H.I.E.L.D.**"

"The storyline is going to change the Avengers' status quo in terms of how they're funded," said Lee. "It'll end up giving them more flexibility since, up to this point, they've been financed and governed by the government and S.H.I.E.L.D. It will definitely be a big turning point for both Iron Man and the Avengers."

Though Marvel would not confirm Cable's appearance at press time, Liefeld says his appearance will officially connect the current Marvel Universe to the "Heroes Reborn" Universe. *Captain America* #6 is scheduled to directly tie into the March issue of *Cable*. Similar to *The Incredible Hulk* #450 in which Dr. Strange enters the "Heroes Reborn" Universe, the Captain America/Cable story will have Cable stumble into the "Pocket Universe" where he discovers the heroes alive. "Cable realizes that he has discovered where Captain America is right now, but he doesn't quite know how to get him back," said Liefeld. "The story is meant to give hope that the heroes will eventually be found." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Larsen gets pumped for Savage Dragon/Hellboy

Just call **Erik Larsen** a **Hellboy** fanboy.

The creator gets to show his fanboy excitement with December's ***Savage Dragon*** #34 and January's *Savage Dragon* #35, which will both guest star **Mike Mignola**'s Hellboy. While Larsen will draw the two-part story arc, Mignola will supervise the handling of the Hellboy character, overseeing the dialogue for his legendary character.

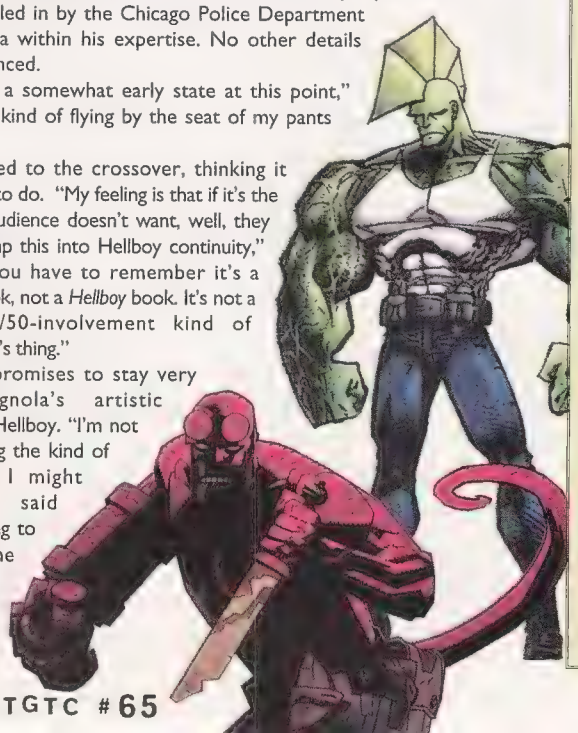
"I love Hellboy," said Larsen. "Mike's stuff is always a great read and I figured it'd be neat to have [Hellboy] in a Dragon story. Mike once said to me, of all the Image books, he could see Hellboy crossing over with the Dragon since they both seem to come from similar kinds of worlds. That makes for a very cool type of a crossover."

Since the two-issue storyline will take place within *Savage Dragon*, it will remain within the continuity of the book. The story's premise will have Hellboy being called in by the Chicago Police Department to handle an area within his expertise. No other details have been announced.

"It's really in a somewhat early state at this point," said Larsen. "I'm kind of flying by the seat of my pants on this one."

Mignola agreed to the crossover, thinking it would just be fun to do. "My feeling is that if it's the kind of plot my audience doesn't want, well, they don't need to lump this into Hellboy continuity," said Mignola. "You have to remember it's a *Savage Dragon* book, not a *Hellboy* book. It's not a stand-alone 50/50-involvement kind of crossover. It's Erik's thing."

Larsen also promises to stay very close to Mignola's artistic interpretation of Hellboy. "I'm not going to be adding the kind of rendering that I might ordinarily do," said Larsen. "He's going to look as though he walked out of a *Hellboy* book." ■ *Matthew Senreich*



BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

• Rumor has it that 1997 will see three new titles vying for the **Homage Comics** stables. ***Empire*** by **Mark Waid**, **Brian Augustyn** and **Barry Kitson** centers on a ruthless supervillain who becomes Emperor of Earth. ***The New Adventures of Abraham Lincoln*** by **Scott McCloud** sees the legendary president leap into today's time and save the beliefs of the U.S. ***Lawless*** by **Steven Grant** and **Mike Zeck** stars ex-con Mick Thorne who keeps a promise to a dying cellmate and finds himself in a heap of trouble. Homage would neither confirm nor deny these rumors.

• Writer **Garth Ennis** has bowed out of writing ***WildC.A.T.s*** after current writer **Alan Moore** departs the series in early '97. Ennis cites an excessive workload as the cause.

• **Mark Waid** and **Rick Leonardi** have signed on to produce ***Pain Killer Jane***, a ***22 Brides*** spinoff series for Event Comics in early summer. Look for a Pain Killer Jane/**Darkness** crossover one-shot by **Garth Ennis** and **Amanda Conner** sometime next spring.

• Word is that the ***Impulse*** team of **Mark Waid** and **Humberto Ramos** will do a six-issue stint on ***Ash*** to give regular penciler **Joe Quesada** time to put some issues in the bank. Meanwhile, Ramos' last issue of *Impulse* will be #25. **Craig Rousseao** will be taking over *Impulse*'s regular penciling chores.

• The **Azrael/Ash** crossover from **DC Comics** and **Event Comics** has been pushed back to a spring '97 release. It was originally slated for November.

• Now that Randy Queen's ***Darkchylde*** is no longer at **Maximum Press**, there are a few suitors looking to publish the series. Rumored among them is **Chaos! Comics**.

• The **JLA/WildC.A.T.s** crossover is tentatively planned for late summer. Written by **Grant Morrison**, with art by **Howard Porter** and **John Dell**, the story will pit the two groups against JLA Silver Age villain the **Time Lord**, as he tries to alter history to his own benefit. Also, Morrison promises that he's come up with a unique way to avoid all the baggage of traveling across dimensions or alternate realities in having the two teams meet.

Possessed Batman Goes on a Deadly Rampage

Will Batman commit murder?

Readers will find out in a 96-page one-shot crossover entitled ***Batman/Deadman: Death and Glory***, scheduled to hit comic stores in December. **James Robinson** (*Leave it to Chance, Starman*) will write the story and **John Estes** (*Tales to Astonish: Hulk/Giant Man*) will fully paint the artwork in this hardcover graphic novel.

Batman murders in a painted hardcover co-starring Deadman

"Though he will be possessed at the time, it's Batman's hands that actually will kill," said Robinson.

The premise of the crossover deals with a possessed Batman killing a restaurant full of patrons. The action will not only tremendously shock Batman, but cause an insurmountable state of tension with **Commissioner Gordon** that leads Gordon to place a bounty on the Batman's head. "There are definitely big ramifications as to what happens with Commissioner Gordon," said Robinson.

After the murders, Batman will hunt down Deadman—a character who was originally popularized by **Neal Adams** and has been recently getting a lot buzz after two **Kelley Jones** mini-series. Thinking it was Deadman who possessed him, Batman will confront the spirit and come to a realization that a third party must have been involved.

"That's when Batman and Deadman team up to bring this guy to justice," said Robinson. "And at the same time, what is at stake is a homeless nobody who actually has a destiny in his next reincarnation which will benefit the entire world, causing the fate of the world to be at stake."

Falling under the "Legends of the Dark Knight" imprint, the graphic novel will take place outside DC continuity and be a type of "Elseworlds" story. Robinson also plans to tackle Deadman's visual evolution in the graphic novel. "The one thing we do is show how Deadman went from the Neal Adams Deadman to the Kelley Jones skeletal version of Deadman," said Robinson. "There's just so much that's happened with Deadman and we want to show it all."

"Deadman's a character that's wide open for interpretation," said Estes. "No one has placed a definitive format to him and that's what we hoped to do—show how we saw him."

Robinson maintains that the story's focus is Batman and his relationship with Deadman. "The book has everything a good Batman story should have," said Robinson. "It has mystery, horror, some cool villains, fantastic artwork and it'll all build to a truly epic conclusion.

"This project lets me do a team-up which appeals to me greatly," said Robinson. "I've always been a fan of the Deadman/Batman team-ups by Neal Adams, so I was very keen on trying something along these lines." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Wagner Brings 'Mage' to Image

Matt Wagner, creator of ***Grendel*** (currently published by **Dark Horse Comics**), is returning to another of his acclaimed creator-owned properties, ***Mage***—and moving it to a new publisher, **Image**.

"I'm starting work in November and the first issue should ship in June of 1997," Wagner said. "It'll be 15 monthly issues that I write and draw. I haven't decided on a colorist yet—that's something I'm pretty persnickety about. The final issue will be a double-sized slam-bang finale.

"The title will be ***Mage: The Hero Defined***. I'm trying to structure it so both old and new readers will be comfortable," he continued. "If you read the first series, you'll get all the jokes; if you haven't, you'll still be able to hit the ground running without getting lost."

Both *Grendel* and *Mage* were originally published by Comico in the 1980s, and it was the complications of his work for that publisher that prompted Wagner to take *Mage* to Image. "After my ill-fated interactions with Comico in the 1980s, I've been very leery of putting all my eggs in one basket," he explained. "I know this is a question I'll get a lot. People shouldn't think of this as my leaving Dark Horse. I'm still working with Dark Horse—there will be a *Grendel* series from Dark Horse next year, written by me and illustrated by a variety of different artists, with untold tales of **Hunter Rose**. Dark Horse will always be *Grendel's* home."

According to Wagner, the production qualities available from Image were a major factor in choosing that publisher for the new *Mage* series: "The quality control that Image gives its final product was a solid point in its favor." ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

We Looked It Up

Askani (as•Kahn•ee) Marvel. **1** a sisterhood in the future created by Rachel Summers **2** Meaning "Outsider" in the language of the future **3** the order that took Nathan Summers to the future to train him as the one who will one day defeat Apocalypse **4** what Capt. Kirk went as for Halloween

DARK HORSE READIES 'NEXT MEN' TPB FOR CHRISTMAS

The sixth volume in the trade paperback collection of ***John Byrne's Next Men: Lies***, will be released by **Dark Horse Comics** in time for Christmas. It reprints the material from the final four issues of the monthly *Next Men* series.

Byrne himself has solid ideas about what will be in the next story of the Next Men, but he's not as certain about *when* it will appear. "It all could happen next year, but who knows?" he laughed.

"There are no current plans to begin doing *Next Men* again," Byrne said. "I realistically don't expect ***Jack Kirby's Fourth World*** to last, and when that goes away, I plan to do a six-issue *Next Men* arc. It's hard to say when that will be—DC seems to be committed to *Fourth World*, but my sense is that the retailers are not."

Byrne knows precisely where the Next Men's adventures pick up. "It's a six-issue time-travel story: They've been picked up by this mysterious figure in black armor who has now scattered them in time," he said. "They will be all over the place, wherever anything nasty is happening—wars, pestilence, whatever. Because it's a time-travel story, they've been placed there because the guy in black armor wants to revenge himself against the Next Men for something they actually haven't done yet."

John Byrne's Next Men Book Six: Lies will ship December 11. It will be 112 pages long, at $16.95. ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

'Classics Illustrated' Return as Study Guides

Acclaim Comics, which acquired the rights to the ***Classics Illustrated*** line earlier this year, is re-issuing the celebrated series of comic book adaptations of famous literary works in a new form. The digest-sized reprints of the original works of the 1940s and '50s will be marketed as study guides, complete with essays and questions prepared by writers and scholars.

According to project editor Madeleine Robins, the new versions of *Classics Illustrated* will be available in both the direct market and in bookstores. "We're trying to take a piece of the Cliff's Notes market," she said.

The project makes it possible to have the original *Classics* art look better than it has in decades. "We're reducing the original art down to about 63 percent of the size it was first printed at," Robins explained. "We've scanned the actual comics pages into the computer and then dropped out the color and cleaned up the black line art, so they'll actually look better than they have looked in years."

All of the digests will feature new cover art. Some of the artists commissioned so far include **Rags Morales** (*Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*), **Scott Hampton** (*Oliver Twist*) and **Bo Hampton** (*The Prince and the Pauper* and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*).

The first four volumes—*Tom Sawyer, Romeo & Juliet, A Tale of Two Cities* and *Jane Eyre*—will be released in December. Each digest is 64 pages, priced at $4.99. The *CI Study Guides* will also be available as CD-ROMs, with audio narration and hyper-text links to the essays and study questions. ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

30 Years of Marvel in One Book

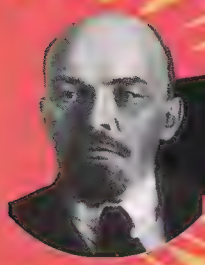
The Marvel Universe is not just for fanboys, said author **Peter Sanderson**. "It can be read by people who haven't read comics in years, people who have just begun reading comics and people who are just interested in this pop-culture phenomenon that is Marvel Comics."

The Marvel Universe, a selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club, is the latest publication from former *X-Men* assistant editor and Marvel archivist Sanderson. The book covers the last 30 years of storylines and Sanderson points out that, unlike Les Daniels' *Marvel: The First Fabulous Fifty Years*, *The Marvel Universe* focuses on the characters, not the company. But it's not an encyclopedic reference book either like ***The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe***, another work to which Sanderson was one of the primary contributors.

"*The Marvel Universe* is written as a story," Sanderson explained. "It is a history of the characters in the Marvel Universe—how they originated and how they developed over the years in the hands of the various creators."

Like all good comic stories, *The Marvel Universe* relies on top-quality artwork to help tell the tale. Sanderson selected classic images and scenes from the past 30 years to embellish his book—artwork by everyone from **Jack Kirby** to **John Byrne** to **Jim Lee** graces the pages. But many illustrations were also commissioned solely for publication in this book. Among the artistic contributors: **Mike Allred**, **Terry Austin**, **Gene Colan**, **Klaus Janson**, **Ron Lim**, the **Romitas** and **Paul Ryan**. How many illustrations in all? "I don't know," Sanderson laughed, "I've lost count."

Prior to *The Marvel Universe*, Sanderson wrote *The Marvel Saga*, *The Wolverine Saga*, *The Avengers Legend* and *The Iron Man Legend*. ■ *Ruth Morrison*



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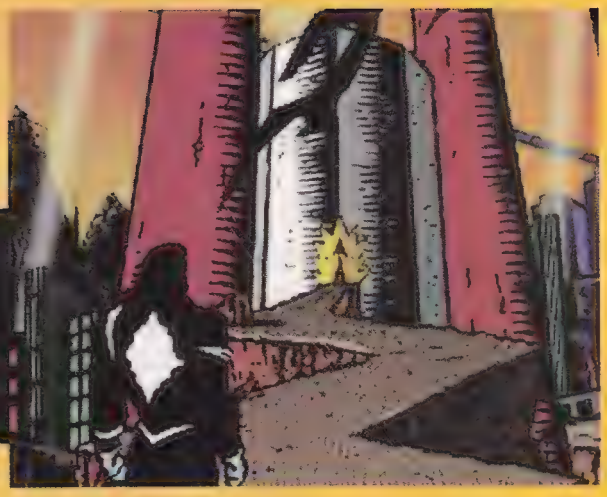

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Catching Up With...

TERRY KAVANAGH AND X-MAN

Nate Grey, a.k.a. X-Man, may possibly be the most powerful mutant on the planet. Stemming from the "Age of Apocalypse" timeline, Nate had been brought into the Marvel Universe, looking for a place to call home. Nate is a lost soul looking for guidance, which he's found in a woman named Threnody, some X-Men friends and even the resurrected Madelyne Pryor. Nate's been through a lot, dealing with the likes of Onslaught and even enduring the fact that his powers are killing him. *Wizard* decided to ask *X-Man* writer Terry Kavanagh about this new force in the X-books and see what Nate'll be up to in '97.

What big plans do you have in store for *X-Man*?
January is the double-sized #25, guest starring Phoenix and Cyclops with a climactic confrontation with Madelyne Pryor. It will show the final fate of Threnody—at least for the moment—bring Madelyne to the fore as a major villain and finally get Cyclops, Phoenix and Nate, who is their offspring in some form from a parallel universe, together. The repercussions will be felt for a long time.

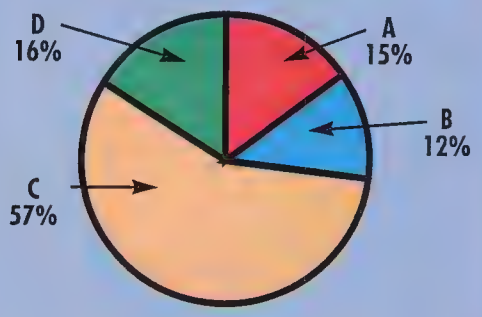
Will there be any other big foes popping up?
There will be a new one, but we haven't quite figured out all the details yet. It'll be Nate who cleans up the threads of the "Age of Apocalypse" and make sure it never happens. He might like to eradicate Sugarman, but Sugarman will be the key to something very important and Nate will learn that it's not in his best interest for him to do this.

Will X-Man ever return to the "Age of Apocalypse"?
He does in *X-Man '96* by Alan Davis, which ties into the regular series. Picking up in issue #24, the one-shot special will have [significantly] affected Nate's motivation. He'll now be a little more pro-active and less reactive. He'll actively go after the likes of Sugarman and the Dark Beast. He'll also come back with a real need to find Forge in our reality.

Will the fact that his powers are killing him be reconciled?
The story that starts in issue #25 will be leading to the resolution of Nate's powers overwhelming him. Something that has been outstanding, a threat to a lot of people in the Marvel Universe, will be resolved with a sacrifice by Nate at the very end of the storyline. It'll tie into the X-titles along the way—10 months or so from issue #25. It'll be a long story arc with lots of smaller tales mixed in. ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Question of the Month

It's been a number of weeks since the first **Jim Lee** and **Rob Liefeld "Heroes Reborn"** books hit the stands, and for this month's AOL poll, we used our "Wizard World" forum on America Online to ask what everyone thought about ***The Avengers***, ***Captain America***, ***Fantastic Four*** and ***Iron Man*** books. We were shocked by the numbers of responses received. In the history of our AOL poll, this series of questions received more replies than any other, so thanks to all who helped. Without further adieu, the first question for this month's AOL poll was:
Of the "Heroes Reborn" books, which is your favorite?
A) *The Avengers;* **B)** *Captain America;* **C)** *Fantastic Four;* **D)** *Iron Man*



We also asked our online buddies their opinions on the following questions:

•Which "Heroes Reborn" book surprised you the most: *Iron Man* **(50%)**, *Captain America* **(22%)**, *The Avengers* **(14%)** or *Fantastic Four* **(14%)**?

Seems many people didn't expect much from old Shell-head and were pleasantly surprised by Jim Lee's take on the character. As one fan stated, "Iron Man seemed to be in the shadows of the FF. It was like, 'Oh yeah, Iron Man rules!' "

•Which "Heroes Reborn" comic are you most disappointed in: *Captain America* **(49%)**, *The Avengers* **(25%)**, *Fantastic Four* **(13%)** or *Iron Man* **(13%)**?

With the Mark Waid/Ron Garney run before "Heroes Reborn," Liefeld had a high hurdle to overcome. Most fans simply did not like the combination of artwork and story on the new book. "I wanted it to be good so badly. Cap is and always was my favorite. It just didn't carry the weight that Captain America always has."

•What non-"Heroes Reborn" Marvel hero would you like to see cross over into this new universe: Spider-Man **(35%)**, Wolverine **(25%)**, She-Hulk **(22%)** or Daredevil **(18%)**?

The response was a bit less enthusiastic for this question. While most people didn't want any other heroes venturing to the "Heroes Reborn" Universe, if they had to pick one, Spidey was the most popular. Why? "If Spider-Man went, the whole clone saga could be wiped clean," said one response.

•Would you want "Heroes Reborn" to officially become the Marvel Universe: Yes **(8%)** or No **(92%)**? ■ *Sorrell Booke*

SPOTLIGHT ON:

TITLE: Star Seed
CREATORS: Janet Jackson, Joe James, Jim Shooter & Pauline Weiss
PUBLISHER: Broadway Comics
CURRENT ISSUE: *Star Seed #11* is scheduled to be released in December. Also in December, *Fatale #8* will co-star *Star Seed*'s Xolus Cor.
BACK ISSUES: *Star Seed #1-#10* were all published by Broadway Comics.

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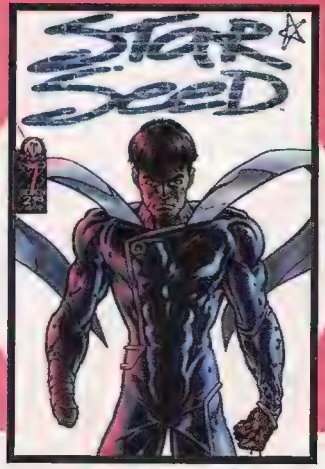

■ *Matthew Senreich*

NEWS BITES

Play Laser Tag with the X-Men

Can you imagine playing laser tag with or against Cyclops?

Marvel Entertainment and **Laser Storm Inc.** have forged an agreement to create a themed laser tag game using Marvel Comics' **X-Men**.

"Laser Storm intends to fully integrate the X-Men theme into an all-encompassing laser tag fantasy experience," said Bob Cooney, CEO of Laser Storm. "We are planning a whole array of new special effects and intricate designs to go along with the X-Men laser tag games."

According to the exclusive, multi-year contract, Marvel has given Laser Storm the licensing rights to over 40 X-Men characters to use in the laser tag game. Laser Storm, which has over 175 locations worldwide, plans to both operate the themed game in its company-owned locations and sell the laser tag game to independent laser tag facilities as well. There was no word as to the opening date at press time. ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Experience Star Trek, Las Vegas Style

Star Trek: The Experience, the new interactive attraction at the **Las Vegas Hilton Hotel**, features Star Trek exhibits, a simulated ride, a replica of the **"Deep Space Nine"** Promenade and a Cardassian restaurant.

This $50 million joint venture between **Paramount Parks** and the Las Vegas Hilton contains sets created on a 1:1 scale replicated from all four television series and seven theatrical movies. The simulated ride allows visitors to assume identities of Starfleet officers and beam onto a shuttlecraft equipped with overhead, side and front viewers for the riders, providing a more realistic experience.

The restaurants and lounges contain authentic 24th century food which can be ordered on machines with voice recognition capabilities. You'll also find the Spacequest Casino with three giant "space windows" giving the illusion the casino is flying through space. The attraction is scheduled to open in Las Vegas on Stardate: spring 1997. ■ *David Borak*

$10,000 Donated in Mark Gruenwald's Memory

The Comics Magazine Association of America donated $10,000 to the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's ***Mark Gruenwald Scholarship Fund*** in early October.

Gruenwald, who passed away last August, had been the Marvel representative to the CMAA's Comics Code Authority Committee. The contribution was made in Mark's honor as a tribute to his dedication and hard work with the CMAA. The CMAA Board of Directors voted unanimously to extend this amount to the **University of Wisconsin Oshkosh** to "advance educational opportunities for the students," commented John E. Kerrigan, Chancellor of the School.

The CMAA is a confederation of comic-related companies including Archie Publications, DC Comics, Marvel Comics, Tekno•Comix, Warner Publisher Services, Ronald's Printing and Sullivan Printers which was formed to set up guidelines and standards for comic books to adhere to in an effort to prevent government intervention in censoring comic books. ■ *Matthew Senreich*

OOPS/CORRECTION

The "Mars Attacks!" movie photos pictured in *Wizard* #64's "Trailer Park" were excerpts from the Topps *Mars Attacks!* 72-card Widevision trading card series which will be released in December.

Wizard would like to acknowledge the contributions of freelancer Gary St. Lawrence to the recent *Wolverine Special Edition*.

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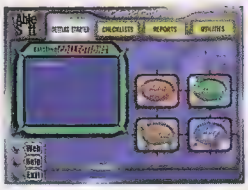

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'Wizard' Winner Signs On With Comico

Dressing up for Halloween has paid off for one *Wizard* reader.

Paula Coonfield, a winner of the 1994 Halloween Costume Contest in *Wizard*, has signed on with **Comico** to co-star in a new comic book entitled ***Elemental Babes: A Photo Multi-Media Bikini Special***. The comic book plans to meld together real photographs with comic art to produce a sequential comic book story.

"What we're doing is using the multimedia angle, as far as mixing photos with drawn images, sort of like Roger Rabbit in a comic book," said Eric Lefeber, head of the project. "Image has used real models, but they haven't really altered them using the computer technology we have. So we thought, 'Why not try it out?' "

Coonfield is set to model as Lady Oblivion, a new character that Comico is integrating into the story specifically for Coonfield. "When Comico first came to me, they wanted me to portray some of their characters in the swimsuit issue," said Coonfield. "Later, they decided upon creating a new character and using my suggestions in developing the design."

Comico approached Coonfield after seeing her recurring references in *Wizard*. Since her original appearance in *Wizard* #40 when she dressed as **Vampirella** for the Halloween Costume Contest, a fan base has formed around her. From there, she appeared in the letters column of *Wizard* #45 as Vampirella again, and #56 when she dressed as **Razor**. Coonfield is simply enjoying the attention and her modeling stint at Comico right now, but she's got her eyes on the future. "Posing for pictures has always been something that I enjoy," she said. "And I am still very interested in doing other shoots and modeling as characters."

So be here next Halloween. ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Where Are They Now?

STEPHEN PLATT

"When I was a hot artist, I really didn't know why," said Stephen Platt, reminiscing on his career. "And when I think back to it now, I still don't know what it was that was making me hot."

Platt entered the comics scene like a flash of lightning in 1992 with an unforgettable penciling run on *Moon Knight* for Marvel Comics. Beginning with *Moon Knight* #55, Platt generated a buzz with an art style that brought new energy and life to the character. "In the detail, he was like Todd McFarlane," said Terry Kavanagh, writer of *Moon Knight* at the time. "In the power and size of the characters, his art was like Dale Keown's. Steven brought a passion to *Moon Knight* that really showed the measure of his work."

Platt's stint on *Moon Knight* included issues #55-#57, covers for #58 and #59, and the interiors for #60, the final issue of the title. At the time, it was nearly impossible to find copies of these issues.

"I had a hard time understanding the hype around the book," said Platt. "You wonder, like I was wondering at that time, about how legitimate it really all was. But at the same time, I was like, 'Wow, this is great!' "

When *Moon Knight* ended, Platt was slated to take over the ongoing *Cable* series. However, Extreme Studios' owner Rob Liefeld entered the picture and hired Platt away. "Rob called me out of the blue and I was very interested in an opportunity at Image," said Platt. "At the time, there was so much publicity and so much support for the company starting out. Retailers seemed to love Image [so much] that it seemed like the best thing to do."

Platt left Marvel to headline Extreme Studios' hot new comic, *Prophet*. Starting out with a significant buzz on *Prophet* #5, Platt's celebrity status seemed to quickly diminish. The reasoning may have much to do with Extreme Studios placing Platt on numerous cover assignments and fill-in pages for other Extreme titles, which possibly thinned out the power of his work.

While Platt's hot artist status may have disappeared, he has continued to produce at Extreme Studios. In 1995, Platt remained a prominent cover artist and fill-in artist for Extreme titles, while also penciling the relaunched *Prophet* series. Platt maintains that his tenure at Extreme served as a learning experience and one he wishes never to trade. "When I went to Extreme, I just got a more mature perspective on the whole idea around being the hot comic book artist versus a *good* comic artist," said Platt. "There's often a vast difference between the two and I felt like I was getting all this attention when I wasn't producing what I thought was my best work."

Platt is currently gearing up for a three-issue run on the "Heroes Reborn" *Captain America* that will feature Sgt. Fury and the Howling Commandos from World War II. "Whenever I get my hands on something new, I get really excited," said Platt. "And I hope I will never lose that childhood impulsiveness and excitement for doing each new thing I take on." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Superman to Teach Land Mine Safety in Bosnia

DC Comics has published a comic book, ***Superman: Deadly Legacy***, to help the children of Bosnia-Herzegovina learn to avoid the land mines that still dot the landscape of their country in the aftermath of its civil war.

The comic will be distributed at no charge to children through the Mine Action Center in Sarajevo. Participating organizations, such as UNICEF and the U.S. State Department, assisted writer **Louise Simonson** and artists **Kieron Dwyer** and **Dick Giordano**, providing research and reference materials to make the comic as useful to the children as it is emotionally gripping.

DC Comics President and Editor-in-Chief **Jenette Kahn** said, "When [singer and activist] **Judy Collins** told me about the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it sounded like a problem where we could be of help. We chose Superman to carry the message because he is uniquely renowned not only for his humanity and compassion, but also as a citizen of the world. We're proud to be a part of this remarkable alliance of government agencies, non-profit advocacy groups and private industry." ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

company updates

ABBA DABBA

Leading into December, the Website www.abbadabba.com will be host to a number of online comic books, including Keith Giffen's *Trencher* (previously at Image), Ernie Colon's *Warmonger* and Bart Sears' *Brutes and Babes*. With a charge of one dollar to download each comic, these stories will be exclusive to the online realm.

ACCLAIM

Magnus returns in a new monthly series in January by Tom Peyer, Mike McKone and Mark McKenna. The new Magnus has traveled from the 40th century to the present with a bad attitude towards all technology. Hide the microwave! . . . Also in January, Warren Ellis and Darick Robertson push the limits of science, religion and physics in the *Man of the Atom* one-shot. Find out if there is a God, and if he lives in the new Acclaim Universe. . . . Sam Beckett is back, ready to leap again, in January's *Quantum Leap: Into the Void* three-issue mini-series by William Messner-Loebs and Javier Saltares.

ARCHIE COMICS

Archie's one time squeeze Cheryl Blossom receives her own ongoing series in January.

BIG ENTERTAINMENT

Best selling author Tad Williams brings his *MirrorWorld* concept to BIG in January. *MirrorWorld: Rain* #1 (of 2) introduces the

story of a strange world in which thousands of Earth people are trapped. Since Earth's weapons disappear when they travel into this world, the people can only be saved by special bio-troopers. . . . Good news for *Mike Danger* fans: The title will run for at least two issues past December, instead of closing like the rest of BIG's ongoing comic book titles.

BROADWAY COMICS

Congrats go out to Broadway Editor-in-Chief Jim Shooter, who was recently honored with a citation from the city of Philadelphia's Department of Recreation in recognition of his 30-year career providing quality entertainment for young people. Way to go, Jim!

CALIBER

Caliber's Tapestry line continues to unfurl with the January premiere of Steve Stegelin's *Boondoggle* series. Plus, the *Tapestry Anthology* will feature stories by Tim and Mary Hildebrandt, Andrew Popoy and Jenni Gregory.

CHAOS! COMICS

Chastity gets her own mini series this January in *Chastity: Theatre of Pain* #1 (of 3) by Brian Pulido, Justiniano and Jason Jensen. . . . Also shipping in January is *Evil Ernie vs. the Movie Monsters* #1 by Phil Nutman, Brian Denham and Jack Gray. This release also features a preview of the upcoming *Evil Ernie: Quest for Nukes*.

COMIC BOOK LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

The Planet Comics trial continues: The prosecution recently moved to upgrade one of the misdemeanor charges (keeping for sale of obscenity) to a felony, and the defense lawyers are fighting to keep the retailers' bail (which must be repaid, because the initial bail's one-year limit has expired) at $10,000 each instead of the prosecution's desired $25,000.

continued on page 30

Continued from page 28

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT

In January, the limited-edition poster of *Chi #5*'s cover returns in a thick paper stock version for only $4.95, making it more affordable than the previous Chromium version.

DARK HORSE COMICS

February sees P. Craig Russell's *Elric: Stormbringer*, adapting Michael Moorcock's conclusion to the series starring fantasy's coolest antihero.... Shipping in February is the illustrated novel *Star Wars: Dark Forces—Soldiers for the Empire*. Written by William T. Dietz and illustrated by Dean Williams, this book is the first of three "graphic story albums" accompanied by illustrations (similar to Dark Horse's *Aliens: Tribes*), and is based on the popular Lucasarts video game *Dark Forces*... A two-part Monkeyman and O'Brien serial begins in *Dark Horse Presents #118*, as the duo battles Gorhemoth!... The six-issue *Drakuun: The Blood of the Dragon Princess* by Johji Manabe begins in February. While signing a peace treaty between lands, a princess sneaks behind enemy lines and starts kicking major ass in this manga title suggested for mature readers. Two follow-up mini-series are already in the works.... March will finally see the release of *Batman/Aliens #1* (of 2), written by Ron Marz with art by Berni Wrightson.

DC COMICS

Due out in 1997 is *Adventures in the DC Universe*, a book set in the "animated" universe of *Adventures of Batman and Robin* and *Superman Adventures*. This book will star other DC heroes drawn in the animated style.... In *Preacher*, 1997 will see relationships change between the three main characters, as tensions grow between them as a result of their recent adventures. The Band of Killers, Arseface and The Grail will play major roles in the year as well.... *The Dreaming* in 1997 will feature arcs starring Mary Pumpkinhead, a 1960s John Constantine, the Leprechaun and Eve (exploring her role throughout history).

ENTITY COMICS

Still riding on the hype of the first *Snowman* mini-series, be sure to check out Matt Martin's *Snowman: 1944 #2*, which will hit comic stores in December.

FANTAGRAPHICS

The Maxx collectors will want to check out *I Before E*, a Sam Kieth creation that precedes his mainstream work. The 64-page comic book reprints early Kieth characters and concepts.

HARRIS COMICS

January's *Vampirella & Pantha Showcase #1* features previews of James Robinson and Joe Jusko's *Vampirella: Crimson Lust* two-issue series and Mark Millar and Mark Texeira's *Vampirella vs. Pantha* one-shot. Both releases are beautifully painted.... The *Cyberfrog 3rd Anniversary Special* reprints *Cyberfrog #1*, originally published by Hall of Heroes back in 1993. The new edition, shipping in January, features an all-new cover by creator Ethan Van Sciver.

IMAGE COMICS

• CARTOON BOOKS

The latest from Jeff Smith's Cartoon Books is the first Bone Classic Wall Art: *Stupid, Stupid Rat Creatures!!!* The 14" x 17" two-color reproduction of Jeff's famous *Bone* chase scene, where the rat creatures and Fone Bone end up on a frail branch, ships in its own protective sleeve and retails for $40.... The official Bone Web page is now online and ready for browsing at http://www.boneville.com. Get a first look at cool new Bone products, see upcoming *Bone* covers, find out where Jeff'll be signing next and win keen prizes. Plus, if you haven't caught the Bone buzz, read the first issue of *Bone* on the Web for free!

• HOMAGE COMICS

Strangers in Paradise #3 will contain a [illegible] on appearance by Dave Sellik, the winner of *Wizard #58*'s "Visit to Paradise" contest. Dave wins the page of original art on which he appears. Look for him [illegible] be the one going go go over Francine [illegible] to case you missed it, there was a variant cover to *Strangers in Paradise #1*. This jam piece by Terry Moore and Jim Lee featured Katchoo and Francine trapped by WildStorm's nastiest villains, and was only available as an incentive to retailers who ordered certain increments of *SiP #1*.

• TODD McFARLANE PRODUCTIONS

Your favorite TMP pals, former Todd Smith penciler Tony Daniel and writer Steve Emond, will be putting their creative juices together on a creator owned project for Image called *The Tenth*. It stars an abomination known as the Tenth, who escapes from his crazed creator Thomas Dorkk. Adding the Tenth and keeping his bloodlust at bay is the beautiful and troubled Katrina. This monthly series takes off in February.

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS

Look for the all-new *WildStorm Spotlight* to hit stores in February. This new monthly series features a rotating creative team covering all your favorites from the WildStorm Universe. Issue #1, by Alan Moore and Richard Bennett presents a Majestic story set at the end of time.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

Check out the 10th Anniversary Edition of Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean's *Violent Cases*. Shipping in February for $12.95, it features a new McKean cover, a new intro by Gaiman and touched-up colors.... Beginning sometime in early '97, Kitchen Sink will be printing graphic album collections of serials from *Penthouse Comix* and *Penthouse Comix Men's Adventures*.

LONDON NIGHT STUDIOS

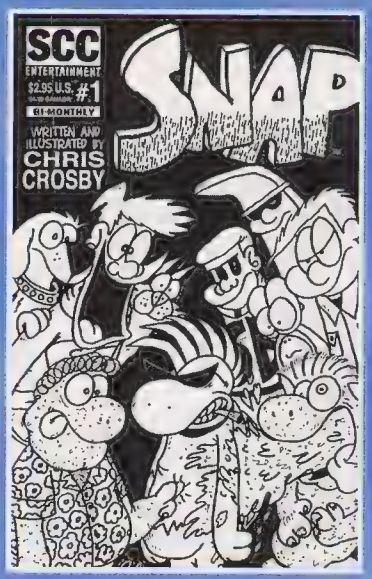
MTV has chosen model and recording artist Carmen Electra, who is the inspiration for the star of the vampire comic *Embrace*, as Jenny McCarthy's replacement in the game show "Singled Out." While LNS says this'll hold its "Embrace" movie project up, it may cause interest in the comic.

MAXIMUM PRESS

In lieu of Rob Liefeld's recent departure from Image Comics, he has announced that his company will gravitate away from "darker"-themed books—no longer publishing titles such as *Priest*, *DarkChylde* and *Celestine*. *Avengelyne* will continue to be published, but will be "toned down and less racy," according to Liefeld. In keeping with the new philosophy, *Youngblood*, *Glory*, *Prophet* and *NewMen* will be brought to the forefront with the "Extreme Genesis" crossover in February.

PIRATE PRESS

Mike Wieringo, David Mack and Ethan Van Sciver will all have pin-ups in the second installment of the four-issue mini-series *Europa and the Pirate Twins*, due to hit comic stores in December.



SCC ENTERTAINMENT

Chris Crosby's *Snap #1*, featuring the exploits of everyone's favorite chain-smoking punk turtle, will be released in January and kicks off Snap's bimonthly series.

byte this

WHAT'S UP ON WIZARD WORLD

Attention all artists! We want you to create our First "Wizard World" Online Greeting Card. The person who creates the card we use will receive personalized greeting cards from several major comic publishers and professionals. Pretty neat contest, eh?

To submit your Greeting Card entry, log on to "Wizard World" on America Online. Upload your picture to the Picture Gallery in the folder "Greeting Card Contest." Information about file formats are located in that folder.

Tired of using AOL's clunky Web browser, but don't want to pay extra to use Netscape? Help is here! AOL 3.0 lets you use Netscape through AOL. The best part is that Netscape is easier to set up on AOL than it is to set up on the internet. Trust us, we've done it. To download the Netscape software and the instructions, go to the "Wizard World" Picture Gallery. The free software is located in the "Wizard Toolbox" folder.

Call 800-754-4400 to hook up to "Wizard World" on America Online. You'll get free software and 15 hours of free online time. Keyword: Wizard

CHAT SCHEDULES FOR THE SPECIAL EVENTS ROOM

MONDAY

- **MANGA/ANIME**
  Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)
  December 2, 9, 23
- **BREAKING IN** Featuring: **David Campiti**
  Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)
  December 16
- **WILDSTORM**
  Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)
  December 2, 16
- **TOP COW**
  Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)
  December 9

TUESDAY

- **X-MEN TRIVIA** Featuring: **X-Pert Benny Powell**
  Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)
  December 3, 10, 17
- ***WIZARD* UNPLUGGED** Featuring: **Real, live funky-fresh *Wizard* Editors**
  Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST) **NOTE:** New Bat-Time! Don't miss it!
  December 3, 10, 17

WEDNESDAY

- **ASTEROID X CLUB**
  Time: 6-7 p.m. (EST)
  December 4, 11, 18
- **TRIVIA CHAT** Featuring: *Wizard* Freelancer: **Matt Brady**
  Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)
  December 11
- **AVENGERS ASSEMBLE**
  Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)
  December 4, 11, 18

THURSDAY

- ***INQUEST* CHAT** Featuring: *InQuest*'s: **Rick Moscatello**
  Time: 10-11 p.m. (EST)
  December 5, 12, 19
- **MYSTERY GUEST** Featuring: **Ruth Morrison & Mystery Guest**
  Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)
  December 12

FRIDAY

- **LOOP (LEGION OF OVERPOWER, MARVEL CCG)**
  Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)
  December 6, 13, 20, 27

SATURDAY

- **FANTASTIC FOUR CLUB**
  Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)
  December 6, 13, 20, 27

SUNDAY

- **SANDMAN100 COMIC BOOK CHAT**
  Time: 8-10 p.m. (EST)
  Featuring: Don Lisk
  December 7, 14, 21, 28

■ *Buddy Scalera (WizardTGTC@aol.com)* W

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AT THE SMALL PRESS EXPO, SIZE DOESN'T MATTER

By Frank Cho
Photos by Charles Steck

EDITOR'S NOTE: To get an insider's perspective on the Small Press Expo held recently in Bethesda, Md., *Wizard* turned to cartoonist Frank Cho to write a first-person diary of his impressions on the weekend. Cho has had a collection published of his award-winning college cartoon strips "University²," "University²" will be transformed into the nationally syndicated daily strip "Liberty Meadows" in April 1997. What follows are Cho's observations of the wild and wacky weekend.

DAY 1, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

6:35 p.m. Arrive at the National Foundation for Character and Cartoon Art in Washington, D.C. The organizers of the Small Press Expo have strong-armed the gallery into allowing cartoonist scum like myself and other self publishers to get drunk on the premises. I'm greeted by Chris Oarr, one of the masterminds of the SPX. It doesn't take me long to confirm the disappointing absence of a keg!

6:36 p.m. Meet Al Gross (*Tarzan*, *Doctor Cyborg*) and Chris Staros (*Staros' Report*) in the back of the room. Gross is explaining his new comic, *Doctor Cyborg*. This book's a cross between "The X-Files" and "Jonny Quest." As Gross puts it, "It's conspiracy theory for the whole family!" Gross thinks there's a connection between the Dead Sea Scrolls and secret atomic testing in Nevada.

6:40 p.m. Jeff Smith (*Bone*) and Charles Vess (*Ballads and Sagas*) come over. The topic turns to the underlying sexual themes in *Bone*. (Because I wanted to know, okay?) When asked if *Bone* will ever bag Thorn, Smith laughs, takes a long sip from his wine and says, "Naw, man." Smith also denies that there'll be any full-frontal nudity of Thorn in future issues.

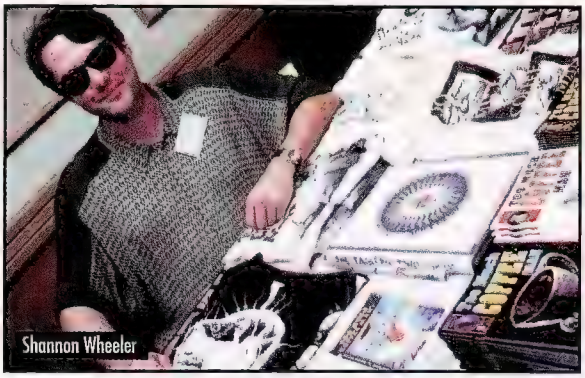
8:15 p.m. Evan Dorkin (*Milk & Cheese*), Sarah Dyer (*Action Girl*), and David and Maria Lapham (*Stray Bullets*) arrive. Dorkin, one of the most prolific and psychotic writers in the field, immediately begins to rant as Lapham hits the wine table with a vengeance.

8:30 p.m. Marc Hempel and Leslee Parker (*TUG & buster*) arrive. Hempel starts taking pictures as I talk to David Lasky (*Boom Boom*).

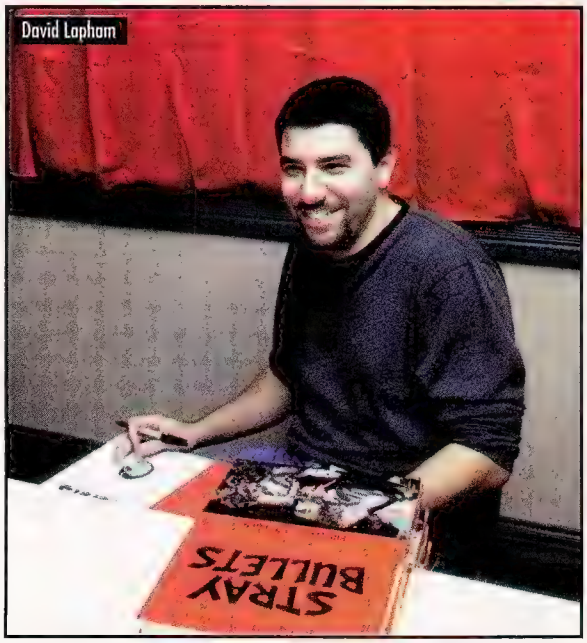
8:45 p.m. The wine's going down as fast as commercial airliners. I ask Lapham about his Miramax Films deal and who's uglier: Quentin Tarantino or Abe Vigoda. Maria Lapham says Mickey Rourke is the ugliest, but Ernest Borgnine is cute.

9:00 p.m. Evan Dorkin sums up his philosophy of entertainment and life: "Everything is funnier with monkeys." The man is a genius! It took me three years to come up with my philosophy, "You can't go wrong with monkeys," and Dorkin nails it in six seconds.

10:30 p.m. The staff of the gallery kick us out. Most of the remaining crowd goes to the American Cafe across the street. Lapham still drunk. I go home.


Shannon Wheeler

Evan Dorkin



David Lapham

DAY 2, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

9:30 a.m. Arrive at the Holiday Inn in Bethesda, Md., for the exhibitors set-up before the SPX. I quickly notice a disappointing absence of a keg!

10:50 a.m. Mark Wheatley (*Radical Dreamer, Breathtaker*), Al Gross, Marc Hempel and I finished setting up our Insight Studios booth. There are no fatalities.

11:00 a.m. Doors open to the public. The public rushes straight towards Jeff Smith's booth.

11:03 a.m. First fan stops by and browses through my book, *University² the Angry Years*. She smiles. I smile. Then she walks away. Story of my life.

11:10 a.m. More fans come by our table. Gross is handing out free copies of his *Doctor Cyborg* preview. Hempel is signing copies of his *Sandman* issues. Wheatley is selling expensive hardback collections of his *Radical Dreamer* series. I know who to ask to pay for dinner.

11:15 a.m. I stop at Charles Vess' table and ask, "Are all these Celtic poems and music written by men in skirts? If so, were there any stand-outs like RuPaul or Boy George?" Vess is mobbed by fans and doesn't answer. I repeatedly ask, "Are there any naked chicks in *Ballads and Sagas*?" Still no answer, and I'm sure I was successful in convincing Vess that I'm a jackass or a retard. I leave.

3:02 p.m. With the art auction for the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund in full swing, I stop by Brian Clopper's table. His *Bombastic Comics* has four stories in one issue. Can't beat that with a stick.

3:15 p.m. My co-writer Marc Crisafulli steers me to Ivan Brunetti (*Schizo*). His book is the funniest of the decade, bar none. A genius or potential serial killer. I can't make up my mind.

3:30 p.m. I rush around to see the other publishers because I have to write this article. I see Steven Blue (*Red River, Awakening*), Ted Rall (*From the Worst Thing I've Done*), Alex Robinson (*Box Office Poison*), David Haspiel (*Keyhole*), Joe Chiappetta (*Silly Daddy*), Art Baxter (*Spud*), Ruben Bolling (*Tom the Dancing Bug*), Shannon Wheeler (Too Much Coffee Man) and Sarah Dyer (*Action Girl*).

4:00 p.m. Expo closes to the public.

8:00 p.m. The SPX has arranged for retailers and publishers to hear talks from Susan Alston of the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund and Bill Schanes from Diamond Comics Distributors. I notice a disappointing lack of a keg. Susan Alston talks about the Planet Comics case. Says today's auction brought in over $1,000. Bill Schanes starts talking about business. I should be listening. Wheatley's on the edge of his seat. I feel myself slipping into a coma. Sitting so long, I begin developing hemorrhoids.

9:50 p.m. I wuss out and head home. Everybody's still talking business.

Art Baxter.

Chris Oarr (l) & Jeff Smith at the Pig Roast

photo: Marc Hempel

DAY 3, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

2:24 p.m. Chris Oarr has arranged for an after-the-event Pig-Roast at his house in Tacoma Park, Md. Almost as soon as I arrive, I notice a disappointing lack of a keg.

2:25 p.m. Wait! There is beer! In cans! Begin to drink. Things become a blur, but I notice that there's a big pit with fire in it. And a damn big pig.

3:14 p.m. The afternoon passes as the retailers and publishers watch the pig roast. Jeff Smith talks of his venture into syndication. Alcohol flows freely.

9:07 p.m. Decide to pack it in. Head home to write this damn article for *Wizard*. ■

ROB LIEFELD SUES IMAGE

Rob Liefeld

The war of words has begun.

Rob Liefeld announced October 2 that he is suing Image Comics for $1 million for breach of contract, breach of fiduciary duties, libel, slander and interference with contract. Liefeld claims that Image has frozen revenue owed to Liefeld's Extreme Comics, as a result, forcing Extreme to delay many titles scheduled to ship through Image, including *Youngblood*, *Prophet* and *Supreme*.

The announcement came almost a month after Liefeld's resignation from Image, the company he helped found.

"We believe we have been severely wronged in the time since we left," said Liefeld. "I just wish we could have just been cut free."

Image Comics responded to the lawsuit's allegations in an open letter dated October 9 stating that it "feels the lawsuit is without merit and that the company intends to vigorously defend [Liefeld's] so-called claims. Moreover, the company intends to file its own cross-complaint against Rob and his companies in the near future." Image claims that it is owed money by Liefeld.

There has been much controversy surrounding Liefeld's departure. When Liefeld resigned on September 4, he stated, "As far as I'm aware, I'm leaving on good terms. I hold no ill will."

However, according to Image, Liefeld resigned minutes before the Image board of directors met to vote him out of the company. Image contended that Liefeld was "placing personal interests and the interests of Maximum Press and Extreme Studios ahead of that of Image Comics." Liefeld insists his attorney-prepared resignation was handed in hours before any such vote to oust him took place.

"I honestly thought I'd walk away from Image, maintain the high road which I think is important, [and not] pick any fights," said Liefeld. "The higher that I went in avoiding conflict, the angrier they got. And they just pushed enough buttons to [the point] where they got a reaction that was necessary."

The announcement of the lawsuit immediately sparked numerous press releases and open letters from both Image Comics and Rob Liefeld.

On October 7, Liefeld issued an open letter to the comics community explaining his reasons for the lawsuit and detailing his departure from Image. In the letter, Liefeld contends he was forced to file suit because "attempts to negotiate a reasonable and amicable split were unsuccessful." Extreme titles such as *Youngblood*, *Prophet* and *Supreme*—scheduled to ship through Image—will be solicited in the near future under the Maximum Press banner, according to Liefeld.

Image maintains that Liefeld owes the company an undisclosed amount of money and there was an attempt at a negotiated settlement outside of court. A payment schedule could not be worked out, according to Image representatives. Image believes the subsequent lawsuit was generated as a diversion from the reimbursement issue.

" 'The truth is out there,' like they say in 'The X-Files' " said Liefeld. "We'll get to it in a court of law." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

SILVESTRI RETURNS TO IMAGE

Marc Silvestri

The prodigal son has returned to the fold.

Marc Silvestri—who departed Image Comics earlier this year—will officially return his Top Cow Comics to the Image banner, publishing and distributing all Top Cow books exclusively through Image Comics and Diamond Distributors, effective January 1997.

"Top Cow and Image are in tune with each other, so it made sense to rejoin," said Silvestri, an Image co-founder. "It's good to be back home again."

Silvestri pulled Top Cow out of Image on June 6, 1996, citing irreconcilable differences with Image co-owner and co-founder Rob Liefeld and pointing to Top Cow's need to establish itself as an independent entity.

"Our decision to leave Image Comics was one of the toughest business decisions we ever had to make," said Silvestri. "But not long after we left, the Board of Directors of Image Comics elected to remove Rob Liefeld from the company. That action enabled me to return to the publishing company I helped found."

Even after his departure, Silvestri remained a part of the Board of Directors that voted to remove Liefeld from Image.

"Image is associating itself with only those who share its vision: quality books from quality creators," said Silvestri. "The new Image, as I see it, is based around this fundamental and I am thrilled to have Top Cow included with such a fine group of people."

■ *Matthew Senreich*

Rob and Todd in happier times

McFARLANE BLASTS LIEFELD, LAWSUIT

Todd McFarlane has always been a staunch supporter of Rob Liefeld. During Image's five-year history, whenever anyone would criticize Liefeld, McFarlane would defend him, claiming that his fellow Image founder was a "wild stallion" best left untamed.

But McFarlane is a Liefeld supporter no more. McFarlane—who has said little since Liefeld's departure from Image—decided to break his vow of silence to talk exclusively with *Wizard* about Liefeld, his stormy tenure at Image and the future of the company.

Wizard: How would you describe Rob Liefeld's tenure at Image Comics?

McFarlane: Rob Liefeld, as a creative guy, really started losing his shine almost immediately at Image. The books were late, they were not of as good quality as some of the other Image books and then he started putting out some of these vibe projects with younger kids. Everything got off on the wrong foot and it never seemed like he was able to get back on track. I don't recall in the history of Image Comics whether I can actually say he was on the *right* track.

There have been conflicting reports about Rob's departure—whether he resigned or was voted out. Could you clarify that?

I don't care how you want to slice it. We took a vote two to three weeks before he quit to kick him out—to vote him out.*

And what is your response to the lawsuit filed by Rob?

We gave him our final accounting of what he owes us, because he owes us a [lot] of money, and he obviously doesn't want to pay. His response to not giving us the money that we think is rightfully ours, is to sue. I found out I was getting sued by Rob Liefeld by a friggin' press release. And so he's suing us because he either won't or can't pay us money he owes us.

Is there any chance Rob would ever return to Image?

I think that's something that we need to make clear. I will quit Image Comics…I will quit this industry…before I let that kid back in Image. You can put that in big bold letters. Over my dead body will that kid come back to Image Comics. ■

*[EDITOR'S NOTE: According to Image Comics representatives, a preliminary vote was held at which time an official Image meeting was scheduled to vote on the dismissal of Liefeld. Liefeld's resignation arrived prior to the official Image vote]

The original Image team minus Rob Liefeld

KING FOR A DAY

Gallery exhibit allows Alex Ross to put his Kingdom on display

"I wanted to get as far away from comics in college as I could," Alex Ross told a group of slightly intimidated teenagers, hanging on his every word. "I wanted to learn other art styles. But when I got out of school, I realized how much I loved comics."

The walls of the small, quaint Four Color Images gallery in New York City vouched for Ross' words. Hanging on the walls were many brilliantly detailed 18.5-by-12-inch *Kingdom Come* paintings by Ross, being sold for prices ranging from $500 to $5,000.

Groups of fans packed the tiny non-air-conditioned gallery in early September, making it a veritable hotbox. But Ross didn't seem to mind the heat as he stood there, sipping a cold soft drink. After all, this was his day in the sun.

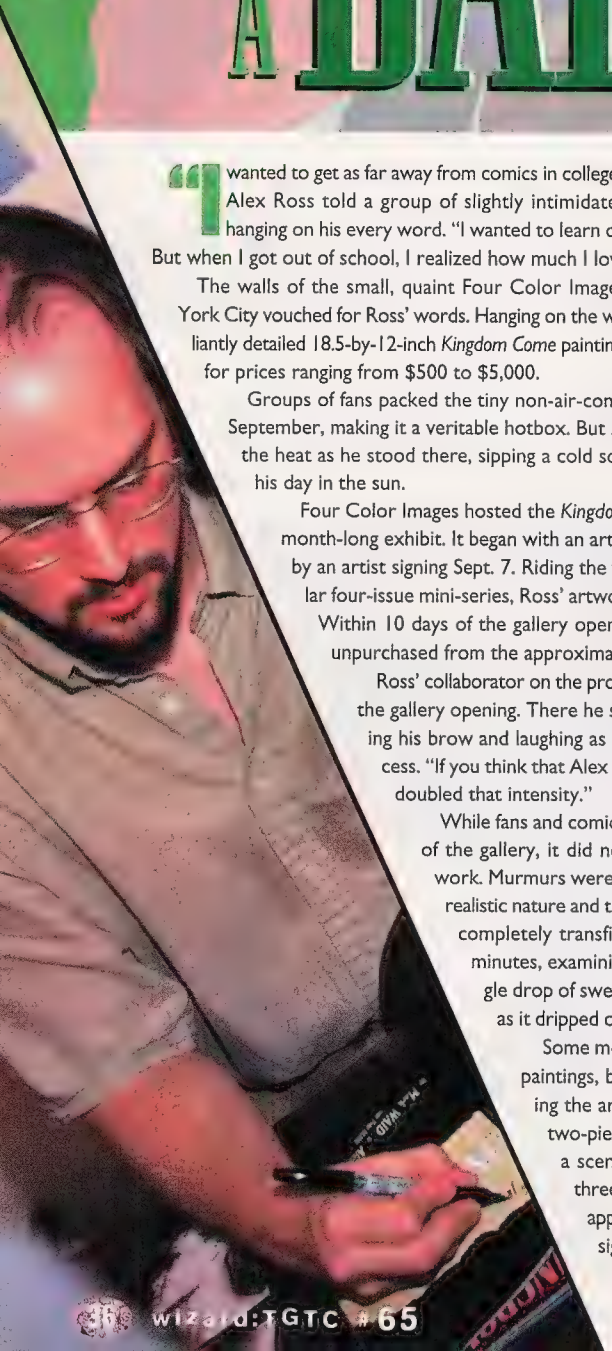
Four Color Images hosted the *Kingdom Come* showing, kicking off a month-long exhibit. It began with an artist's reception Sept. 5, followed by an artist signing Sept. 7. Riding the wave of the tremendously popular four-issue mini-series, Ross' artwork sold at an incredibly brisk pace. Within 10 days of the gallery opening, only 70 or so pieces remained unpurchased from the approximately 140 pieces on sale.

Ross' collaborator on the project—writer Mark Waid—also attended the gallery opening. There he sat with project editor Dan Raspler, wiping his brow and laughing as Raspler recalled the intense creative process. "If you think that Alex is intense," Raspler said, "working with Mark doubled that intensity."

While fans and comic creators participated in the social atmosphere of the gallery, it did not overshadow the general fixation on the artwork. Murmurs were heard throughout the gallery about the detail, the realistic nature and the time placed into each painting. One man remained completely transfixed, staring at page 35 of *Kingdom Come* #4 for 20 minutes, examining every face in the United Nations crowd while a single drop of sweat ran down his face. The sweat droplet didn't affect him as it dripped off his chin, hitting the floor. It was a night of amazing sights.

Some members of the crowd were stunned by the price tags on the paintings, but most didn't seem to notice. Four Color Images was selling the artwork for fees of $500 for an interior page to $5,000 for the two-piece T-shirt design painting. Ross noted one page wasn't for sale—a scene in issue #2 in which the Spectre tells Norman McCay of the three main heroes. On that page (18), Ross recreates the very first cover appearances of Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman. "That piece has significance with comic history," said Ross.

And so, it appears, does Ross' work. ■ *Matthew Senreich* W



At right: Ross poses next to the *Wizard* #57 cover, a piece priced at $3,500
Below: The exhibit's display case

Original art from the first issue

Above: The original four issues containing the exhibit's artwork
At right: Ross braves the Africa-like temperature as he chats with fans

DEVIL of a TIME

DAREDEVIL WRITER KARL KESEL GIVES OL' HORNHEAD WHAT THE READERS WANT—A SENSE OF HUMOR

"DAREDEVIL IS BUGS BUNNY."

Say what, doc? Not a likely comparison, but believe it or not, that's what *Daredevil* writer Karl Kesel came up with when he thought long and hard about what makes the Marvel hero unique.

"The problem with Daredevil is that he's a poor man's Spider-Man," he explains. "Let's face it, let's say it flat. He isn't as fast as Spidey or as strong, and he swings around. So I first had to figure out what makes DD different from Spidey." The web-swinger, Kesel notes, seems to work best as a character when he's facing tons of problems. "Angst is his middle name. He doesn't have an easy life. Readers enjoy it when he's losing. I wanted DD to be enjoyable when he *wins*."

Which leads to his archetypes. "Spider-Man is Daffy Duck, because Daffy is funny when he loses," Kesel explains. "Bugs is funny when he wins, and that's my approach to Daredevil. He always *seems* to be in charge of the situation, whether he really is or not. He has the unflappable coolness of Bugs Bunny." (Discerning readers caught the clue in issue #354, when Spidey turned to DD and said, "You're despicable," in homage to a classic Bugs/Daffy exchange.) That kind of deep psychological scrutiny carries things only so long, the writer admits. "I'm already veering away from that some, but it's my starting point for considering how to approach Daredevil."

IF YOU'RE THINKING THAT LOONEY TUNES makes a pretty daffy place to find inspirations for an urban crime comic, you haven't picked up the book recently. At the direction of Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras and with the help of Kesel and new artist Cary Nord, issue #353 returned the title to the light-hearted atmosphere it had in its earliest days. Matt Murdock is again partnered in a law firm with Foggy Nelson and linked romantically with Karen Page. "Bob thought grim 'n' gritty was dying and that it was time to go in the other direction," says Kesel, who had taken DC's *Superboy* to new heights of humor during the past few years. "They wanted the wisecrackin' Hornhead and swashbuckling hero, and I was interested in that one."

Kesel has been a DD fan since the Stan Lee and Gene Colan days of the 1960s, and that's the version of Daredevil he favors. "I think the Frank Miller Daredevil stuff [in the early 1980s] is extremely strong, and it hit me as hard as everyone else. But it's not the sort of Daredevil I lean toward with my writing strengths and weaknesses," he says. "I can write fun and exciting comics, but I don't think I can do comics that punch you in the gut like Frank does." He also favors character interaction over all-out action, he adds. "I remember reading issues of *Fantastic Four* where I laughed so hard at what Johnny and Ben were saying to each other that I forgot who the FF was fighting."

A clear indication of Kesel's approach comes from his favorite DD storyline, which began in issue #25 and introduced Matt's fake twin brother, Mike. "I loved the idea of Daredevil having two secret identities," he says. "It was unique, and it made his life a lot more complex than he intended. We're not bringing back Mike, but the editorial approach is definitely in that direction." Mike won't be returning mostly because the editors won't let Kesel do it, he adds. "I could write a story that brought him back pretty effortlessly," he admits. "I doubt it'll see print, though."

One reason Kesel likes the notion of reviving Mike Murdock today is that it plays to a pivotal theme in the book that seems appropriate for a blind hero: Things aren't always the way they appear.

"Daredevil is a more complex character than most heroes in the Marvel Universe," he says. "He dresses like the epitome of evil but he's a good guy; he's a lawyer by day and a vigilante by night. His contradictions are what make him more realistic and more interesting to me than a char-

BY CRAIG SHUTT

january 1997

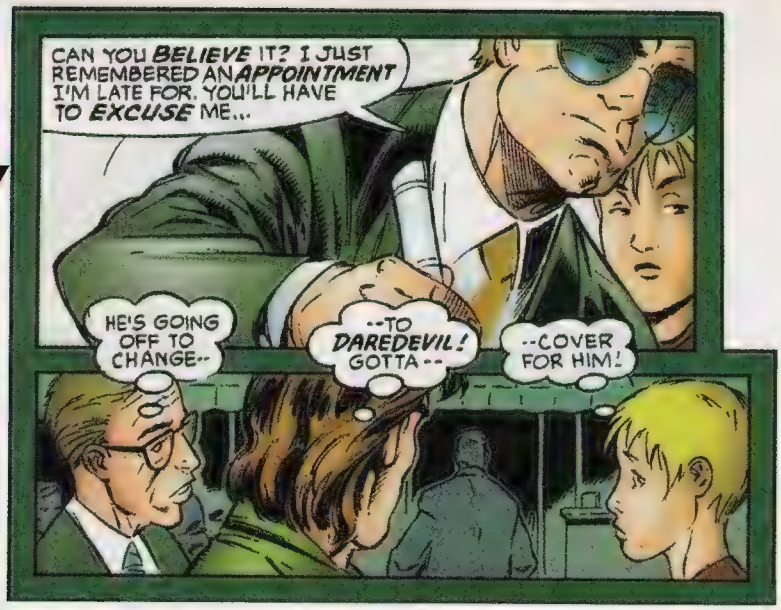
THAT'S NOT ALL, FOLKS

Daredevil #362 reintroduces the Black Widow, who's been feeling a little down since she watched the Avengers "die" in the "Onslaught" crossover. That leads her to the shaky notion that these things wouldn't happen if the Avengers' foes were dealt with more firmly in the first place.

"She starts avenging the Avengers," says writer Karl Kesel, by attacking the team's former foes. She and DD meet up when the Gray Gargoyle robs a bank, which works out fine. But pretty soon she confronts villains who have served their time and are living peacefully. "She pushes it to the edge," he says. "Daredevil will have to try to pull her back." The story is planned as a trilogy, with episodes appearing about four issues apart. The Widow will also make an appearance during this time in the new *Thunderbolts* title.

Issue #362 also begins a subplot featuring the law firm's new client, Liz Osborn, and her right-hand man, Mark Raxton—a.k.a. the Molten Man. Raxton winds up framed for some robberies at Osborn Labs, causing the company's directors to try to force him out. That in turn leaves Raxton no place to go but back to crime—unless Daredevil provides an alternative.

Issue #363 focuses on Foggy's friendship with DD and uncovers some interesting background on Rosalind Sharpe and her extremely loyal receptionist, Sunny Sitka. Then #364 reveals some of the unsavory deeds going on behind the scenes at WFSK. It also introduces an as-yet-unnamed villainess with the gift of unlimited sight through many wavelengths, including infrared and X-ray, says Kesel. "She's the exact opposite of Daredevil, and in some ways a complement." ■ *CS*



acter like Captain America, who you understand instantly. I want to explore how he's defined by his inconsistencies."

THE THEME OF NOT JUDGING A BOOK BY ITS COVER has already reared its head several times in Kesel's *Daredevil*. It shows up in everything from the recently completed storyline in which the villainous Mr. Hyde was accused of a crime he didn't commit to the introduction of Rosalind ("Razor") Sharpe, the new boss of Murdock and Nelson. Sharpe is a cold manipulator who wants to attach herself to Murdock and could care less about Nelson—even though she's Foggy's mother and abandoned him at birth, as revealed in issue #361.

To emphasize the importance of perception versus reality in the book, Kesel has begun using more first-person narrative, focusing our attention on Matt's perspective. "So much of DD's uniqueness is based on things that aren't visual," he explains. "The easiest and most powerful way to get that across is with an interior monologue." That used to be handled with dozens of word and thought balloons, but Kesel doesn't like that route. "First-person captions seem more natural. But it's a little more difficult to bring off, since it's obvious the hero survives to tell the story."

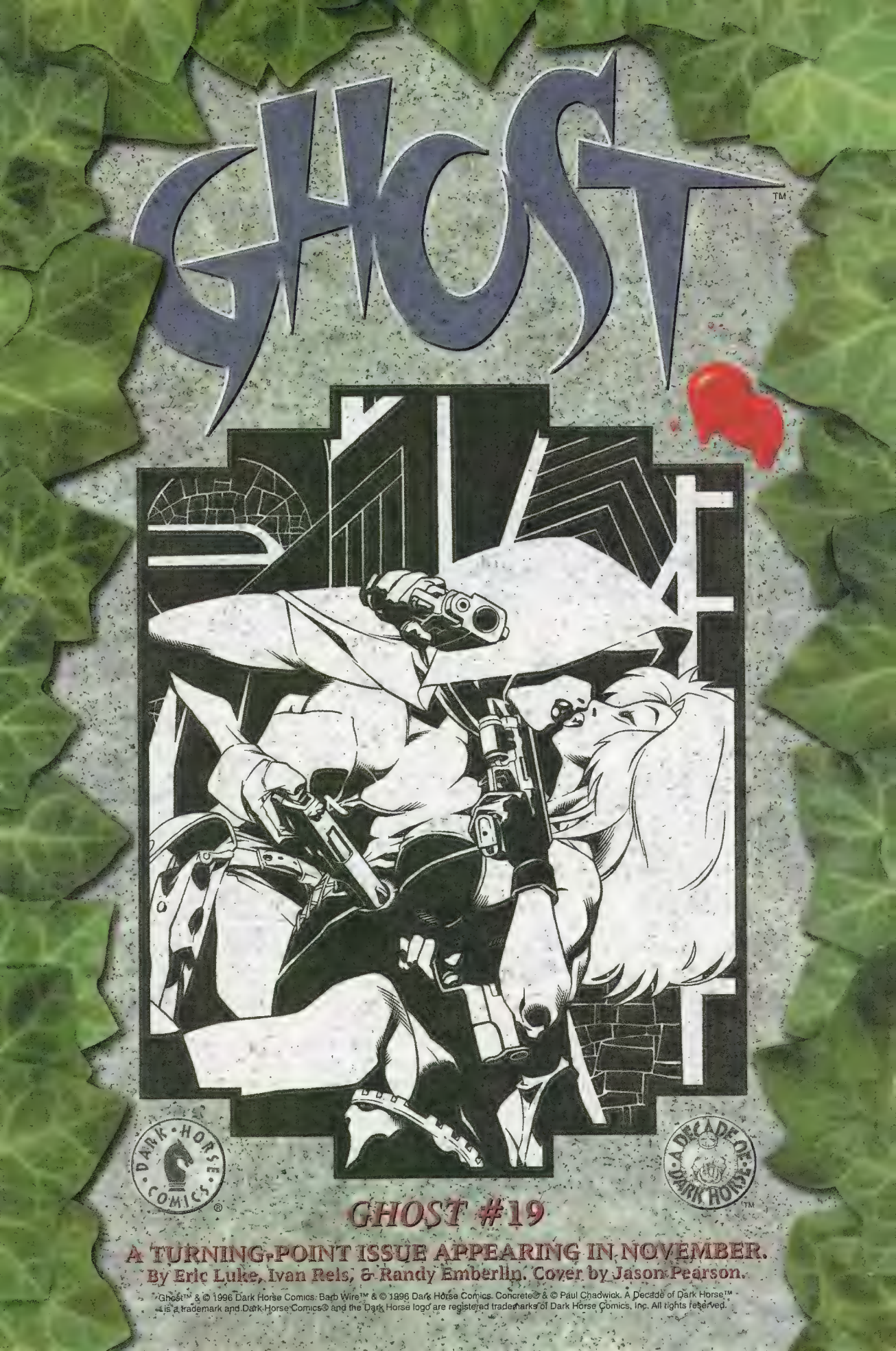
That narrative also helps convey DD's powers, which have been scaled back and better-defined. "He can read newspaper type with his fingers if he concentrates real hard, but it's not easy." Similarly, his radar sense gives him outlines and some detail of figures, but it's not pronounced unless he really strains at it—as seen in his adventure with the Absorbing Man in issue #361. At the same time, he's able to "see" in every direction at once, giving him an advantage nearly as good as...um...Spider-Sense.

"It's important to remind readers that this is a blind hero," Kesel says. "He *remembers* colors, but he can't differentiate them now. He doesn't know the color of Karen's eyes, and that kind of thing haunts him." But for the most part, DD is reconciled to his blindness and knows that without that defect, he couldn't be a superhero. "He's comfortable with the way things are," Kesel says. "My Daredevil is a fairly well-adjusted guy."

That doesn't mean Matt Murdock won't be facing his fair share of troubles, though. "We've been talking about emotional and ethical problems that Matt might face," he says. But there will be less distinction between the personalities of the hero and his secret identity. "Both Karen and Foggy know his secret, so there's no reason for him to play at being dull as Matt. That's another reason I introduced Rosalind Sharpe," he laughs. "We needed *somebody* in the story who didn't know Daredevil's identity!"

ALTHOUGH KESEL SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME working out who Daredevil is, he admits that

Above and left: Comics' worst-kept secret—Daredevil's secret identity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"GRIM 'N' GRITTY WAS DYING AND IT WAS TIME TO GO IN THE OTHER DIRECTION... (MARVEL) WANTED THE WISECRACKIN' HORNHEAD AND SWASHBUCKLING HERO, AND I WAS INTERESTED IN THAT ONE."—Kesel

Foggy is his favorite. "I really relate to him," he says. "Foggy is the kind of guy who bumbles around and doesn't always have the answer, while his friend does everything perfectly. But he's really got a big heart. Their friendship will be developing into the core of my writing on the book. There's a lot I can do with the friend of a superhero."

That will be emphasized in an upcoming story that Kesel refers to as "Daredevil's Pal, Foggy Nelson." "I want to explore what happens when the word gets out that if you need to get in touch with Daredevil, you can call Foggy." That garners Foggy a lot of attention and gets him a few perks, such as better tables in restaurants. "He's a celebrity by association, but there will be a downside to that too." (For more on upcoming stories, see the sidebar.)

Foggy's relationship with his mother, Sharpe, will also develop, Kesel says. "When we first see her, she makes it clear to Matt that she doesn't care about Foggy, her own son, and that's pretty cold. Foggy and Matt know they can't trust her or what she says, because the person she's most interested in satisfying is herself." An upcoming issue, however, sees her warming up to Foggy and wanting to make it up to him. "But is she lying?" Kesel asks. "I think there are some interesting things to do there. Hopefully, readers will get the feeling there's more going on than meets the eye."

Matt's relationship with Rosalind isn't a bed of roses, either. "Rosalind sees Matt as an extremely popular litigator she can latch onto," he explains. "She doesn't think he's an extremely *good* litigator; he gets by on boyish charm. She's not necessarily wrong, but she overlooks his clever use of the law, which she passes off as glibness and jurors' sympathy for his blindness. She's a wonderful point of friction for everyone. She's what I needed to make things gel, and she'll be around for as long as I'm on the book."

That's good news for Karen Page—really. Although the two women didn't get off on the best foot when they met in issue #356, things aren't always the way...well, you know. "Karen and Rosalind are going to become very good friends," he reveals. "Both are strong-willed, and Rosalind respects that kind of strength, particularly in other women. She goes out of her way to be Karen's friend, and Karen will respond to that." Needless to say, that becomes a point of contention between Karen and her boyfriend Matt, who worries that Karen will wind up hurt. "But Karen isn't stupid," Kesel points out. "She realizes how Rosalind works. She's got her eyes open."

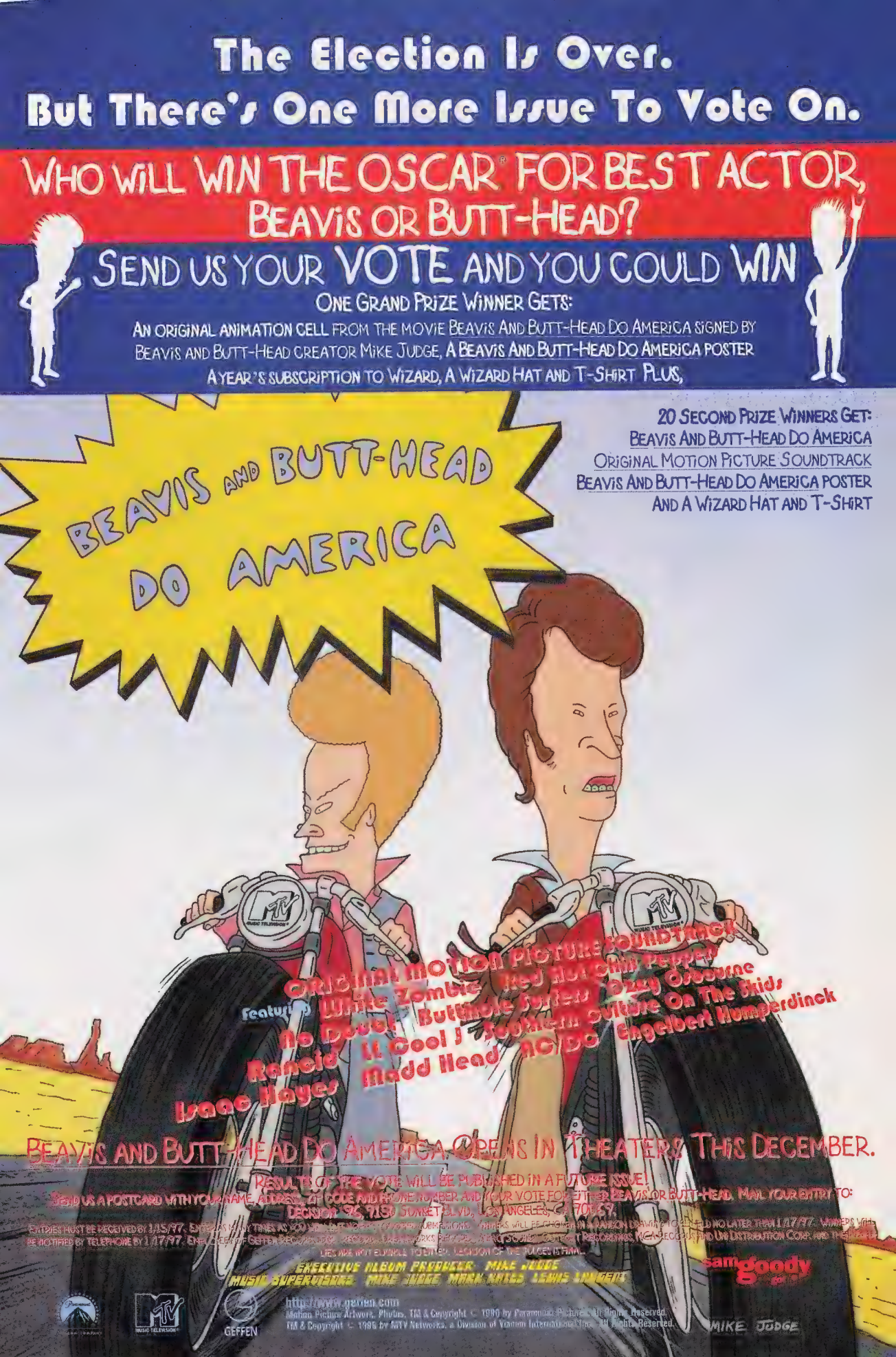
KAREN'S NEW JOB AS A LATE-NIGHT TALK-RADIO HOST adds a layer of mystery to her too. With her on-air personality as Paige Angel, she has her own nighttime secret identity. "The job makes her a perfect counterpoint to Daredevil," Kesel says. "He can swing through the city and hear her voice anywhere. I think that's a very romantic notion and really bonds them together strongly." That connection also allows her to serve as a conduit of information to our hero, passing along tips that help him fight crime.

Unfortunately, Karen works at WFSK, the radio station owned by Wilson Fisk, a.k.a. the Kingpin. "He still has ties to WFSK, but he doesn't manage day-to-day activities," Kesel says. "We'll be learning who does handle that stuff and meet some pretty unsavory characters." And you just know the Kingpin is lurking in the background somewhere. "When I started on the book, I agreed the Kingpin wouldn't show up in the first year," he explains. "But obviously he's in the shadows and has an influence." And that year of banishment is nearing an end. "I have an idea of how I'd like to see him come back," he admits. "It might tie into Daredevil's new direction."

His what? "I have an idea for taking Daredevil in an *entirely* new direction, but it isn't approved yet," he reveals. "It's in many ways the next logical step for him. It wouldn't change his powers, his personality or his niche in the Marvel Universe, but at the same time it would change *everything*. I see the house ad saying, 'Daredevil has just become the most powerful hero in New York City.'" Kesel admits that he doesn't have any specific timetable for this plan, but he agrees that issue #375 would be a good time for a change.

IN THE MEANTIME, DD's current direction seems to be pleasing a lot of fans. "Very few readers remember far enough back to know when DD had this style before," Kesel says. "But most of them seem to be enjoying that he's got a sense of humor. And at the end of the story, when Daredevil wins and kisses Karen, it's a very satisfying moment," he says. "You get what you wanted."

Craig Shutt, who also reviews the top 10 events of 1996 in this issue, has a hard time seeing the Kingpin as Elmer Fudd.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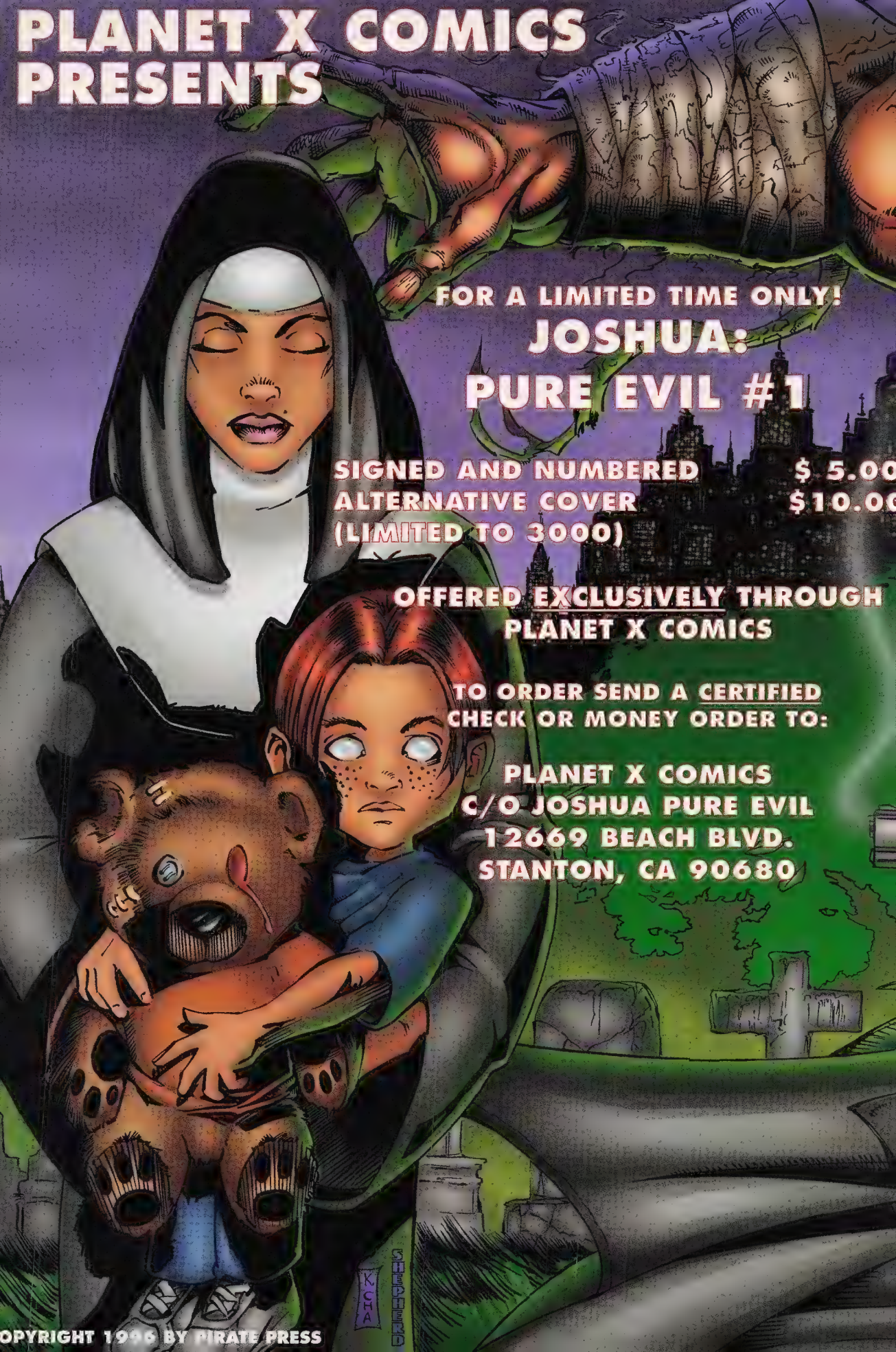
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When headed into a job interview, stay calm—the editor will usually be happy to see you and your work

BREAKIN' IN

TIPS FROM THE PROS ON WHAT YOU NEED TO GET A JOB IN COMICS

So you wanna break into comics?

Your dream is to work for Marvel or DC? Your life won't be complete until you're the next fan-favorite writer or artist?

Well, your chances of doing that are probably better than, say, playing in the NBA. But comics pros have a warning for aspiring creators: Don't expect overnight success. While "lightning can strike at any time," as DC editor Dennis O'Neil puts it, it's more likely you'll be standing in submission lines at conventions before fans start lining up for you.

"I see a lot of kids break in who want to immediately make [a huge] impact," says Extreme Studios' Rob Liefeld, whose early work was for DC and Marvel. "I tell guys here all the time at the studio, 'If a genie came to you tomorrow and said you would never be a superstar, would you still do this?' Comics are really fun and a great experience, but they're hard work."

Especially considering the industry's tough times. Just a few months ago, Marvel let go more than 100 employees. Clearly there are many professionals out of work these days who will have an upper hand in job placement.

But the field is open—to everyone.

"We're always looking for talent. That's the goal of every day," says Bob Harras, editor-in-chief at Marvel Comics. "We're in a tough state across the board, but we're determined to put out good comics no matter what. Every industry goes through tough times, but we're looking for tomorrow when things start to turn around. Just because we're going through a rough patch in the industry right now doesn't mean it's going to last forever.

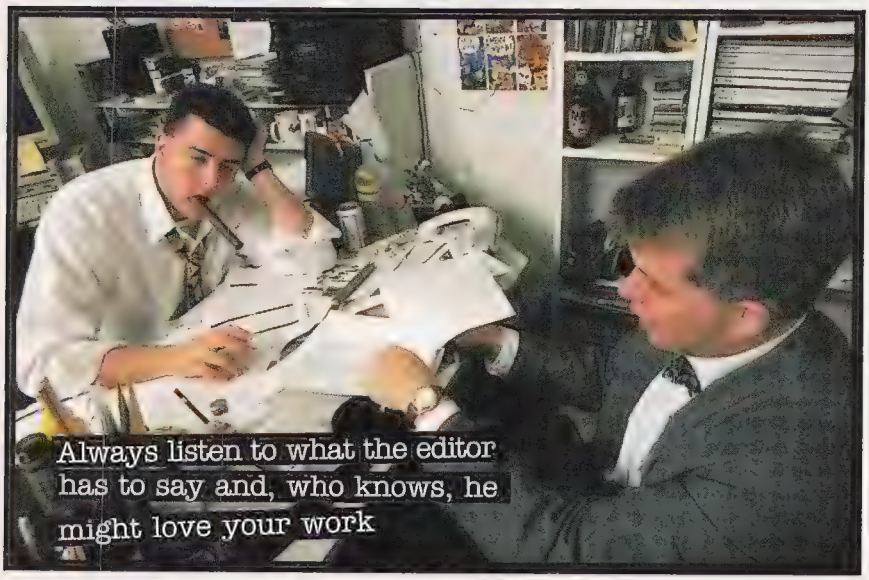
"Send your work in. If you have the talent, nine times out of 10, you're going to get a call from somebody."

So if you've got what it takes, you should get where you belong. But how do you break into the biz, especially at the big levels? The most important thing is for people to see your work through submissions, whether they are sent into companies or displayed in person.

Wizard spoke with comic book professionals and here's what they are looking for in prospects.

by Rob Allstetter

Photos by Paul Schiraldi



Always listen to what the editor has to say and, who knows, he might love your work

Wanna Do Editing?

As opposed to the freelance disciplines, an editor is usually a staff position, which requires more formal skills, training and experience.

"Editing is a tough one to crack," says Harras, who has the final say in an editing hire at Marvel, as opposed to the hires of other disciplines, which are done by line editors. "Sometimes it can be a writer who has been around a while and wants to be an editor."

Harras says editors oversee the entire production process and must be familiar with every step. They also need to be able to work with people and handle deadline pressure.

"You should have a knowledge of comics, a familiarity with the product, as well as an affection for the product," he says. "A college degree is not necessary, but preferable. I tell people who want to jump in from high school, that [college] is important."

Many of Marvel's editors come from the company's intern program. It gives Harras and the other editors a chance to watch a prospective editor in action—interns are usually brought back in as assistant editors. While there is an internship available for high school juniors and seniors, the majority of Marvel interns are college juniors and seniors receiving college credit for their work. Applicants should send a cover letter, résumé and a letter from their college stating that they will receive credit for their internship. For more information concerning Marvel's internship program write to:

JENNIFER SCHOLL
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Wanna Do Writing?

"Writing is one of those abilities you can't really define until you actually read a person's product," Harras says.

O'Neil, the line editor of DC's Batman books, has taught numerous classes in writing. "You need to be conversant with technique and structure, and that *can* be taught," he says. "But to learn to be a good writer, you have to do it by doing it and doing it and doing it.

"You should have as full a tool kit as possible. Learn everything you can."

Scott Lobdell, writer of three of Marvel's X-books as well as *Iron Man*, is three credits away from a degree in psychology. He says a course in Russian Literature was most helpful in writing comics. "X-Men stories are not unlike Russian literature," he says. "You have large, rambling stories with tons of characters trying to bid for the spotlight."

Plot submissions should be just one page at the most, double-spaced. Concise and precise. Editors simply don't have time to read lengthy, drawn-out pieces.

"When you're doing a submissions story, think of a really exciting story," Harras says. "Don't think of anything that's going to change reality or kill off major characters. We're looking for writers who can tell interesting stories about people. That to us is more interesting than blowing up the Marvel Universe. Anyone can blow up the Marvel Universe. Telling a story about Peter Parker, Mary Jane and some villain showing up is better."

Marvel submissions editor John Lewandowski suggests using one of the main characters for your submission. "We're not looking for a Brother Voodoo or Machine Man story," he says.

Harras has another way to break into writing, which Marvel is trying out. "Take a comic book that has already been printed. Take a look at how the writer scripted the dialogue for the few pages. Then send in how you would script the dialogue," he says. "What we're trying to do is test some young writers first on scripting, then on plotting. It's a potential way of looking at different strengths. If a writer comes in who is really good at dialogue and not ready for plotting, we'll start them off that way. Plus, it's very important to see how they handle dialogue."

Even if all goes well, don't expect to be writing the major titles right away.

"The other day, I got a call from a college

kid, completely unpublished, who wanted to write Batman," O'Neil says. "Well, I would like to knock out Mike Tyson. You have to pay your dues and learn your craft."

Wanna Do Penciling & Inking?

"If you want to be a penciler, the best bet is to draw, draw, draw and send your samples in to the submissions editor or the editor of your favorite book," Harras says. "And the best way to show your samples through your storytelling is to take a sequence from a book that has been published, look at it and say, 'How would I tell this two- or three-page sequence in my own particular style?' And send that in to the editor so he has a point of reference."

What is Harras looking for?

"Talent is the key," he says. "A little formal training never hurt anybody. Take some anatomy courses. A lot of people believe, 'Oh, I can do that,' when they look at a comic book and that they can draw from what they see. But a good artist knows you draw from life first."

Adds Event Comics editor Laurie Bradach: "You need life drawing classes, and a lot of them. If you're good enough to draw people in proper proportion, then you can push them out in superhero proportion."

Generally, a five-page submission is good enough for editors to gauge a prospect's talent. A variety of sequences is suggested.

"Let the artwork do the talking," Lewandowski says. "I still want to know anything you have had published and any art training you have had, but be brief."

Lewandowski suggests that prospects include their ages with submissions. It helps him gauge development and potential. "If I have somebody turning in artwork in his 30s that looks like he's a teenager, I would not give him the same response as I would someone in his late teens," Lewandowski says.

Inking submissions should be the same size as those for penciling, and editors are looking for a lot of the same things.

"Inking is a little more gray for me," Harras says. "I don't have a quick answer for inking. It's one of those things when you see a good inker, you just know it. That's usually very subjective."

Lewandowski looks for three things from prospective inkers: clarity (it must be clearly understood what is going on), depth (by separating objects in the foreground from those in the background) and believability (do your objects look like they could truly exist?). "You need to make it easy for the reader to understand what the reader is looking at," he says.

Wanna Do Coloring & Lettering?

These skills are kind of like offensive linemen on a football team: they don't always get the most attention, but they can make the "skill players"—quarterbacks and running backs in football, writers and artists in comics—successful.

Lewandowski gets far fewer submissions for these skills, which are becoming more dependent on computers, especially with lettering services like Richard Starkings' ComiCraft.

"It's extremely, extremely tough to break in as a colorist," Lewandowski says. "I don't want to discourage people, but I have a number of friends who are colorists and are hurting for work, and they are all proven professionals."

Like penciling or inking, Lewandowski suggests a submission of no more than five pages for colorists.

"Color a wide variety of situations, locations and emotions," he says. "Talk about outdoors, indoors, happy to scared spitless to ordinary situations in the park or way off in a jungle. Show ordinary people in ordinary circumstances, aside from a couple of guys trying to beat the snot out of each other."

Adds Harras: "You need to know how to tell a story through coloring, how to make a page more exciting. Bring out the elements that need to be brought out and push some elements into the background. You're the final storyteller in a lot of ways. You are elevating the art to the next degree."

Lettering prospects can take calligraphy courses, but this skill is generally only taught from older letterers. An increasing number of books at Marvel and DC these days are lettered with computers, *not* by hand.

"The letterer is usually the guy who has to turn it around the quickest, so an eye on the clock is good," Harras says. "You need to show clear legible lettering."

Wanna Play It Cool?

Okay, you've shown your work. What's

Pay attention and always be open to criticism (even if you don't agree)

Regardless of the outcome, the editor has everyone's best interest in mind

next? Normally, you'll get feedback—positive and negative—on your abilities. More times than not, you won't get a job right away. But those already inside the industry say you shouldn't be discouraged.

"I'm not the be-all and end-all, and I'm not being snobbish," Lewandowski says, "but you have to be able to listen to criticism and try to improve constantly."

Lewandowski frequently deals with prospects who turn in numerous submissions, taking his advice and applying it each time to improve. Improvement is key if a prospect hopes to be mentioned to an editor at Marvel.

Editors also point out that comics is a networking type of industry. Keep hustling. Your sample may not be impressive enough to get you a job at Brand X, but it could be enough to get a recommendation for a job at Brand Y.

And who knows where that can lead? Fourteen years ago, a fresh college graduate named Bob Harras dropped off his résumé at Marvel Comics. Harras was hired in as an editorial assistant—"I was essentially a mail boy," he laughs—and today he's the big cheese at Marvel, the guiding force behind the largest comic book company.

"It's a fun career and, if you love comics, it can be the best place in the world," Harras says. "It's definitely possible to make a career out of it. That's what comics are in a way: all about possibilities and all about fun." W

Rob Allstetter, our resident "Trailer Park" hound, tried breaking into comics as a janitor but his portfolio was deemed "silly."

Bending Into Submission?

Here are some tips about turning in your work to comics editors:

- Sending to a submissions editor is safer than sending to a line editor. "I would never say, 'Don't send to a particular editor.' It's just faster to send to the submissions editor," says Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras. "You're going to wait a longer time to get a response from a line editor. The submissions editor is the clearing house. He's the best person to send to because that's his job, to look at everything."
- Do not call editors! Send a cover letter or a résumé, but keep it brief. Don't drone on about what a big comics fan you are. Make your points and let your work say the rest.
- Keep your samples limited. Your strengths and weaknesses will be as apparent in five pages as they will in 10.
- Send a self-addressed stamped envelope with your work. This will increase your chances of getting a written reply.
- It's not necessary to wear a suit and tie when approaching an editor at a convention. "Just be neat," says Marvel Submission Editor John Lewandowski.
- When getting in-person criticism, there are two bad responses. One is to get defensive about your work and argue. The other is to feel crushed and walk away with your feelings hurt. The first shows you can't work with people, and the other says you lack the confidence to be successful.
- Think small. Frequently, the big hitters make their mark in the small press first. DC editor Dennis O'Neil points to writer Chuck Dixon, whose work on Eclipse's *Airboy* displayed the sensibility O'Neil was looking for on *Robin*.
- Sometimes, the best way to break in is through a back-up story or an anthology story. This gets your work published and noticed.
- Be persistent. "I always kept coming around and dropping stuff off," X-Men writer Scott Lobdell recalls of his attempts to break in at Marvel. "One day I took a 2 1/2-hour train ride to a convention just because I had an envelope I wanted to drop off to an assistant editor in the reception area. Then I turned around and headed right back. It was important to meet the editors." ■ *RA*

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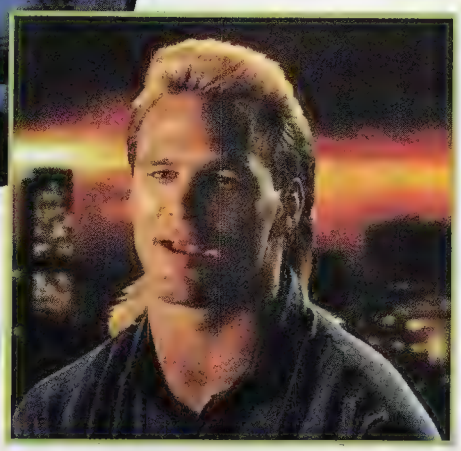
Wizard *casts the* Savage Dragon *movie!*

Casting Call

By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

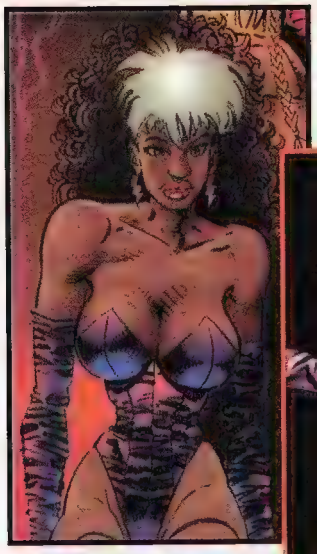
All photos: Everett Collection, unless otherwise noted.

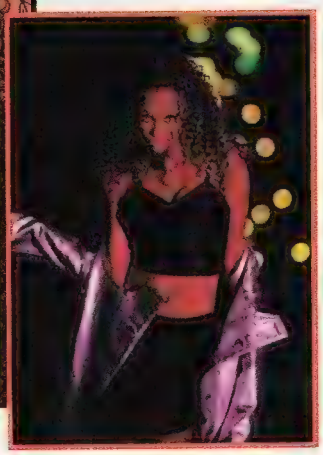
He's big, he's green, he's got a fin on his head and he can kick some major ass. No, it's not the Hulk on a snorkeling trip, it's the strangest cop on the Chicago Police Department, the Savage Dragon. And who wouldn't want to see a live action flick of this? A huge green cop kicking the livin' crap out of some bad guys and getting a beautiful babe at the end of the day. You can't get much better than that. So without further *adieu*, c'mon and take a look at our picks for the Dragon movie.



SAVAGE DRAGON

Besides being green, the Dragon needs to be big, bad and have an "I can kick anyone's ass" attitude. Brian Bosworth ("Stone Cold") has been there and done that so he's our pick for the lead.





RAPTURE

Dragon's girlfriend, Rapture, needs to be drop-dead gorgeous, and pretty open-minded about going out with a big green guy. We think supermodel Tyra Banks could fill this role.

ALEX WILDE

The role of Alex needs to be played by someone who is feminine and sexy, and strong-willed enough to be a tough cop. Halle Berry ("Executive Decision," "The Rich Man's Wife") would be perfect for this role.

STAR

Peter's one of those innocent looking kids who likes to hang with the Dragon. We needed someone who could fill his shoes and Patrick Dempsey ("Loverboy") seemed to fit the bill.

RITA MEDERMADE

Rita needs to be someone who can show the bad guys that she won't take any crap. Farrah Forke ("Wings") has the look and the attitude to pull this off.

LT. FRANK DARLING

James McDaniel ("NYPD Blue") has shown he can play the role of a tough cop before, and that's why we wanted him for the role of Frank Darling.

MIGHTY MAN

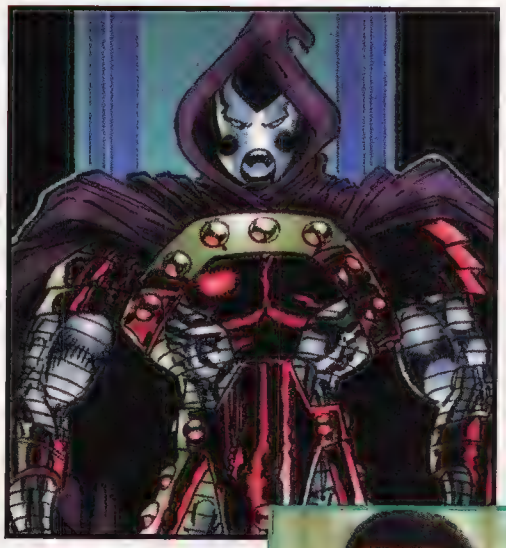
Obviously we needed someone well built and good looking for the role of Mighty Man. David Chokachi's ("Baywatch") got the body type Mighty Man needs.

NURSE ANN STEVENS

She's a woman, yet she's also Mighty Man…it's very strange. So for Ann Stevens, we thought of Bridget Fonda ("Single White Female"). She's got that cute, wholesome and caring look a nurse should have.

CYBERFACE

Cyberface is one big ol' bad dude who's shown he can give a good beating as well as take one. We needed someone who looks big, bad and most of all, tough. Joe Lara ("Tarzan, The Epic Adventures") would be able to play this villain great.



OVERLORD

Robert Davi's ("License to Kill," "Profiler") got that cold, hard and evil stare that could make a superhero crap his pants. We couldn't think of anyone better to play Overlord, one of Dragon's main villains.

POSSESSION.
CORRUPTION.
SUSPICION.
REDEMPTION?
BATMAN
DEADMAN
JAMES ROBINSON • JOHN ESTES
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WIZARD'S '97

Astro City

Friendly Downtown

Center of Commerce

Business Centers

THE COMPLETE GUIDE

BY SCOTT BEATTY

FIRST EDITION

"YOU WON'T FIND A SAFER CITY IN ALL OF AMERICA!"

proclaimed famous Astro City Mayor Sam Crandall in 1953—and his words still ring true. With the lowest crime rate of all major American cities for the past 48 years, Astro City has enjoyed the benefits of its many superpowered heroes and vigilante crime-fighters—the city's main attraction and greatest commodity. Whether flying through the air or prowling through dark alleys, men and women with powers and abilities that defy the imagination have made Astro City a place which people both want to visit and to make their residence.

Founded at the base of majestic Mount Kirby in 1852, Astro City was once known as Romeyn Falls, nestled between the Rocky Mountains in the West and the tall grasses of America's heartland in the East. Fed by cool mountain springs, Romeyn Falls emerged as a center of commerce for pioneers traveling westward along with the expanding United States.

Romeyn Falls was founded by European and Scandinavian immigrants who settled the area after abandoning their desires to make the rough passage through the Rockies to the fertile valleys of California. Since the latter half of the 19th century, Romeyn Falls has continued to grow into a major American city, not unlike Denver or Salt Lake City—cities that also blossomed during America's westward pioneering. And it's perhaps this pioneer spirit—fueled by sweat and willpower—that planted the seeds for even greater American heroes.

In the early 1920s, as America recovered from the wounds inflicted by World War I, Romeyn Falls achieved prominence as the home of the very first publicly known superpowered hero, the flying Air Ace. Though no one considered his importance at the time, this flight-endowed hero would be the first of many superpowered titans to color the 20th century and defend the world against the forces of evil.

American superhero activity increased tenfold as the United States entered World War II, and once again Romeyn Falls was the superhero hub, with such champions of democracy as the Astro-Naut, Lamplighter and the team of All-American and Slugger battling threats both foreign and domestic and helping to end the war.

In late 1946, as America enjoyed newfound prosperity, Romeyn Falls was devastated by evil forces. Only its superheroes saved the city from utter destruction, and only the unwavering faith of its populace could rebuild it in 1947. Astro City erupted from the rubble of Romeyn Falls, fueled once again by hard work and sacrifice—and protected by a new age of heroes as the space age dawned.

Now, as Astro City turns to the millennium, it finds itself a hub of American technology, thanks to the laboratories at Fox-Broome University and those used by Augustus Furst of the First Family. In fact, Fox-Broome was the development site of the compound known as Averine, a pollution-reducing gasoline additive that allows higher mileage per gallon.

Watched over by the superteam known as the Honor Guard and an equally diverse collection of heroes, Astro City enjoys the lowest per capita crime rate of all other cities in the United States. In fact, Astro City has earned the distinction of "America's Safest City" many times over by the FBI—and why wouldn't it, with the likes of Samaritan, Winged Victory and the First Family standing vigilant? Like the gleaming rocket icon that watches over the city at AstroBank Tower—itself the nucleus of an atom—Astro City is at the heart of America's hopes and dreams of a brighter tomorrow.

Aided and abetted by superheroes, the Astro City Police Department is ever-vigilant in keeping the peace

Facts About Astro City

POPULATION (1996)

Metro Area	5,172,000
City	1,223,000

- 17 million airport arrivals per year
- 11 million rail commuters per year
- 3.3 million overnight visitors per year
- 1.8 million foreign visitors per year
- 1.2 million convention delegates per year

GEOGRAPHY

Size of Astro City is 227 square miles

Distance from Chicago	16 hrs. drive (average)
Distance from Des Moines	10 hrs. drive (average)

NOTABLE BUILDINGS

	DATE	HEIGHT
Grandenetti Cathedral	1903	256 ft.
AstroBank Tower	1947	1,152 ft. [85 floors]
(1,182 ft. to top of Rocket Beacon)		
Binderbeck Center	1956	940 ft. [78 floors]
The Sturgeon Building	1965	998 ft. [82 floors]

CULTURE FACTS:

- 11 musical/theatrical venues
- 8 museums and 6 art galleries
  - Museum of Modern History
- 2,200 eating establishments
  - Beefy Bob's (fast-food franchise)
  - Goscinny's (fine dining)
  - Loony Leo's (1940s Hollywood-themed nostalgia)
  - Feldstein's Bar & Grill

NOTE: *Remember that the thin air of Astro City's altitude can intensify your reaction to alcohol.*

- 5 newspapers
  - *Astro City Rocket* (daily)
- 7 magazines
  - *Current* (Astro City's Weekly Feature)
- 12 book publishers
- 8 TV stations
  - KAST-TV (Channel 17)
  - KBAC-TV (Channel 3)
    - —featuring the popular "Astro Kidz 2day," hosted by Stanley Tripp
  - KACT-TV
- 13 radio stations
  - KAST-FM
- 9 universities and colleges
  - Fox-Broome University
- 6 city parks
  - Memorial Park (home of the Silver Agent memorial)

NOTE: The Astro City Transit Authority (ACTA) Bus Service and ACTA Central Line subway system provide inexpensive transportation throughout the city, with convenient stops in every neighborhood.

WEATHER RECORDS

(At City Center, except for Wind Record at Mount Kirby Observatory)

With an elevation of 528,000 feet, Astro City's climate includes mild, dry heat in the summer with pleasantly cool nights. Snow seldom stays on the ground in the winter.

AVERAGE CLIMATE

Summer temp. (July)		85° F (high)/56° F (low)
Winter temp. (Jan.)		45° F (high)/18° F (low)
Rainfall	11 inches	
Snowfall	60 inches	
Lowest Temp.	-23° F	2/27/71
Highest Temp.	105° F	5/31/69
Snowiest Day	84 inches	1/3/1899
Rainiest Day	15 inches	3/17/63
Highest Wind	95 m.p.h.	12/15/44

Astro City

1) City Center
2) Old Town
3) Bakerville
4) Chesler
5) Goldwater Heights
6) Derbyville
7) Rensie
8) Fass Gardens
9) Shadow Hill
10) Mount Kirby
11) Biro Island (Prison)

Popular Visitor Attractions and Events

The Astro City Stars hold the record for attendance in Major League Baseball, with 275 consecutive sell-outs

MOUNT KIRBY

With thousands of acres of pristine woods, nature trails and picnic areas, Mount Kirby provides the perfect getaway from spring to autumn. Children love the Sheldon Petting Zoo, featuring a menagerie of American wildlife. In the winter, Mount Kirby sports some of the finest skiing around—and it's all just a few hours from City Center. And don't forget to visit the observation area overlooking the First Family's headquarters surrounding Fox-Broome University's Mount Kirby Observatory.

THE ROCKET BEACON

High atop the AstroBank Tower in Binderbeck Plaza resides the Astro City Rocket, symbol of Astro City and much more. As a beacon to Astro City's heroes, the Rocket Beacon is, in fact, the city's most-trusted early-warning system—a superhero-signaling device designed to prevent the same tragedy that nearly wiped Romeyn Falls off the map. Though travel to the top of the Beacon is not available (for obvious security reasons), the nearby Sturgeon Building provides ample view of the Rocket from its 80th floor Skylight Room restaurant.
Call the Skylight Room for reservations—open daily.

ASTRO CITY STARS

As one of the latest baseball franchises to enter the American League, the Astro City Stars have risen to prominence in the last few years as a force to be reckoned with, winning the American League wildcard playoff spot in the 1994 and '95 seasons. Can a pennant win be far behind? Come cheer the Stars to victory under the lights at Schwartz Field!
Game dates and times available by calling 1-800-GO STARS.

MEMORIAL PARK

Memorial Park is both a small recreational park and a tribute to one of the city's legendary heroes, the Silver Agent, who died in 1973. The Silver Agent was one of Astro City's best and brightest—a new hero for a new age in the post-War 1950s. With guns blazing, the helmeted Silver Agent fought the good fight. From Cold War to costumed criminal, his flame burned brightly. Today his statue stands in Memorial Park, head bowed solemnly with a plaque inscribed "To Our Eternal Shame" as a reminder of the Silver Agent's heroism.

ASTRO CITY ANNUAL DEDICATION FAIR

Since 1947, the city's populace has gathered during the week of August 1-7 at the foothills of Mount Kirby to rededicate their home and honor the rebuilding of Romeyn Falls. Carnival rides and bake-offs can be found at the Annual Dedication Fair, which begins with a parade from Binderbeck Plaza at City Center as the Rocket Beacon is activated at dusk, shedding its many colored lights upon Astro City and reminding all of its inhabitants to never be in fear of the dark.

NOTE: Astro City welcomes all tourists to enjoy its many cultural sites and attractions, but assumes no responsibility (monetary or otherwise) for potential damages incurred during superhuman conflicts.

For a current calendar of cultural events and updated biographies of Astro City's luminaries, check out the Astro City Tourist & Information Bureau's website at **http://www.bonner.rice.edu/morrow/kabc/**

(Above) Majestic Mt. Kirby rises high into the sky to the north of Astro City

(At right) The statue of Silver Agent in Memorial Park honors one of Astro City's greatest heroes

Astro City's Famous Faces

SAMARITAN Leader of Honor Guard

The man known as Samaritan by an awestruck media burst onto the American scene on January 28, 1986, averting the near-disastrous launch of the Space Shuttle *Challenger*, and sparing all of its crew from certain death. Clad from head to foot in red, the caped hero with bright blue hair has become one of the world's greatest heroes since that fateful day, honored frequently by global and civic agencies, but rarely slowing down long enough to touch the ground—or bask in his honor as one of Astro City's most respected heroes.

WINGED VICTORY Heroine

If Samaritan is Astro City's Nietzschean ideal man, then the proud Winged Victory is its superwoman. Though never having joined the illustrious Honor Guard, Winged Victory's protection goes much further than simply battling criminals. Having founded several schools throughout the metro area (and 14 nationwide), Winged Victory has earned the respect of women worldwide by teaching females young and old the art of self-defense—and the freedom inherent in self-respect.

THE FIRST FAMILY Hero Team

Led by the brilliant Augustus Furst, the First Family is one of Astro City's trusted superteams, standing vigilant in its headquarters high atop Mount Kirby. Encompassing three generations of heroism—from Augustus and his brother Julius, through adopted superpowered children Nikolai and Natalia, to Natalia's husband Rex and their daughter Astra—the First Family may not be the most normal nuclear family, but they're certainly the most recognizable!

JACK-IN-THE-BOX Vigilante

He may be modeled after the popular children's toy surprise, but Jack-in-the-Box isn't playing kids' games during his nightly romps throughout Astro City, keeping the streets safe. First sighted in 1964, Jack-in-the-Box brought WhamCo Toys' criminal connections to light, uncovering the company's plot to arm criminals with advanced weaponry. In 1983, Jack curiously left the Astro City scene, only to return once again in 1989—putting his trademark electrifying rubber stun noses on hapless felons.

CRACKERJACK Hero

Ask any other costumed hero about the wisecracking, acrobatic Crackerjack and you might hear an unexpected expletive. But make no mistake—even though his cohorts in Astro City's heroic community might not approve of his flashy bravado and cheerful grandstanding, many have certainly welcomed Crackerjack's assistance in the war on crime. With his number of false identities, no one knows who Crackerjack is. Who knows—maybe the person sitting next to you on a Central Line subway train might be him!

THE HANGED MAN Supernatural Guardian

Most often sighted in the old world neighborhoods of Shadow Hill, bordering the Eastern slope of Mount Kirby, the Hanged Man is perhaps the most macabre Astro City superhero in appearance. However, many a frightened citizen will recount their thanks when the floating dark avenger appears to ward off the fabled "night creatures" hiding in the alleys of Shadow Hill. But don't expect an answer out of this macabre hooded guardian.

THE HONOR GUARD Hero Team

Since 1959, the world's most powerful heroes have all marshaled under one banner—The Honor Guard—formed to thwart the Legions of Midnight. Though the Guard's ranks have changed since its inception under Max O'Millions—including such stalwarts as the Silver Agent, Cleopatra, Leopardman, Starwoman, Kitkat, N-Forcer and The Bouncing Beatnik—it remains the world's first and best line of defense against the forces of evil. Today's Honor Guard—consisting of Samaritan, N-Forcer, M.P.H., Black Rapier, Quarrel, Beautie and an all-new Cleopatra—is perhaps the strongest force ever! W

Before becoming a Wizard staffer, Scott Beatty enjoyed a short stint as a member of Astro City's superhero community. Great Scott! saved a puppy, put out a trash fire and got the crap kicked out of him by the Shmoopy Gang.

WARRIOR
SKOOSH!

THE WIZARD Q&A:

Scott Lobdell

Now the lone X-Men writer, Scott Lobdell is the last word on Marvel's mutants

By Marc Shapiro

SCOTT LOBDELL has an interesting way of putting things into perspective. In the world of the X-Men writer, striptease shows and comic books go logically hand in hand.

"There's this show on a cable station in New York City that's got nothing but strippers," he says in his low, somewhat distant voice. "More people will watch that show than will ever pick up a copy of the X-Men with my name on it. So it's really hard to get hot wired about what my place in the universe is. What I do is just comic books."

But it's comic books, going on six years with *The Uncanny X-Men* and more recently *Generation X* and *X-Men*, that have earned the soft-spoken Lobdell points as the pilot of intricately plotted, character-driven superhero tales. "I was not one of those people who had comics read to them by their mothers since age two," he says with a halting, deadpan delivery punctuated by occasional, understated humor. "So I've been able to come at writing comics from a different place."

Scott Lobdell, born the middle child in a seven child family and so "the one who needed the most attention," got into comics late in the game when a hospital stay at age 17 introduced him to the wonders of the paneled page. A post-hospital visit to a comic book convention iced the deal. "I picked up *Giant-Sized X-Men* #1 and had the sense that this was going to be something really cool."

The writer spent his dues-paying years writing for *Starlog* and *Marvel Age* magazines, as well as performing stand-up comedy. He continued the stand-up gig through his first preliminary sales to *Marvel Super-Heroes* and *Marvel Comics Presents* and a seemingly never-ending string of eight-page back-up stories and occasional full-length forays into the likes of *Excalibur*. He left the comedy stage for good six years ago when he was offered the job to write *Uncanny X-Men*.

Lobdell, in a good mood a week before winging to Paris with his wife to celebrate their first wedding anniversary, takes *Wizard* through his X-odyssey.

WIZARD. When did you feel that you'd finally arrived as a writer in the comic book industry?

SCOTT LOBDELL: I'd have to say it was *Excalibur* #31. I had been writing a bunch of eight-page stories for quite a while and was getting the work but I couldn't find anyone to take the concept of me jumping from eight-pagers to a full story. I just couldn't find an editor who would take that leap of faith. Then an emergency came up and they needed *Excalibur* #31 done in a short amount of time and I was able to do it. That was when I felt I had finally made the jump. I didn't get any-

PHOTOS BY JAY STRAUSS

Vital Stats

[illegible] Scott Lobdell
[illegible] Writer
[illegible] August 21, 1960 in Marlboro, NY
[illegible] New York, NY
[illegible] Writer of *Uncanny X-Men* for the past six years, recently took over full-time chores on *X-Men*. He's had a hand in ushering in some the most popular X-tales like "Onslaught," "Fatal Attractions," and the wedding of Cyclops and Jean Grey.
[illegible] "Knock Knock." "Go Away!"

where near the cusp of greatness until years later but that was an indication that I had broken through the wall.

How did you get the *Uncanny X-Men* assignment?

It was the night of the annual Marvel Christmas party about six years ago. I was hanging out in the bullpen before the party started and Bob Harras came up to me, literally [grabbed] me by the collar, took me into his office and plopped down 22 pages of Jim Lee's penciled breakdowns in front of me. He looked me in the eye and said, "Scott. 22 pages in two days. This book is due on the stands in two weeks. Can you do it?" I said yes. He said "Okay, here's my home number and here's Jim Lee's home number. If you have any questions, call us." I left his office and went to the party. Word got around real fast and people came up to me and asked if I was nervous. I kind of felt like I was in a no-lose situation. Either it would be really bad and people would say, "Well he only had two days" or it was going to be real good and people would say "Dear god! How could he do that in two days?" The first issue I did was *Uncanny X-Men* #286 and I was happy with it. And I guess the editorial gods must have thought so as well because it's six years later and I'm still here.

Which are your favorite X-Men characters to write?

I would say my favorite character changes every time I sit down—in the sense that I don't have any least favorite characters. The kids in Generation X are fun to right. Professor X is a character I've always found fascinating. I also like Nightcrawler. I've been dying to get that character over to *Uncanny X-Men* for years. Iceman, because he has been such a blank slate for most of his comic book life, it's really fun to go in and dig around and figure out exactly who he is.

Has that fun extended to your recent tour of duty on the "Onslaught" storyline?

"Onslaught" has been a difficult story for me to be involved in. Initially it was intended to be a story about a man [Professor X] who is trying real hard to do good. But what it's ultimately become is a story about an angry, frustrated person who is having to deal with rage and a damaged psyche. My own inclination is not to tell a story that's draped in this kind of cynicism.

So "Onslaught" has not been a fun project for you?

I don't mean it to come across that way. The good thing that has come out of "Onslaught" is that some people were trying to portray Xavier as this conflicted, under the surface "evil" who has been dishonest with himself. That put me through some definite changes. It forced me to go in and focus and highlight the fact that, through it all, Xavier is a strong enough person to gather these 40 odd mutants and get them to dedicate their lives to what he stood for. "Onslaught" was a story whose goal was to blur Xavier's goals and dreams. As a writer, the story forced me to focus even more clearly on the character than I had before.

So then "Onslaught" threw you a lot more curves than you were used to getting?

Yes. That would be a fair statement.

Was "Onslaught" the toughest book you ever worked on?

I've had some other tough ones over the years. I had to write *Uncanny X-Men* #325 four times—completely from scratch. I couldn't, for the life of me, bring myself to tell the story of what happened to Storm during the 20th

At right: An emotional moment for Colossus and the X-Men, the death of Illyana, from Uncanny X-Men *#303, is one of Lobdell's favorite stories*

"Chris Claremont's work on the X-Men remains the best. There's no way to overemphasize Chris's work... Chris kept the entire industry alive in the late '70s and early '80s..."

—Lobdell on his predecessor

anniversary of the character. While I finally came up with a story that everyone could agree upon, to this day I find the whole experience fairly depressing. *X-Men: Prime* was an exceptionally difficult story to write because it involved a mutant who makes his way across the country only to die on the steps of Xavier's mansion. I'm always depressed when the X-Men fail.

What X-Men story or issue are you particularly proud of?

Uncanny X-Men #297, the first real Xavier story, is one that sticks out for me. *Uncanny X-Men* #303, the death of Illyana issue, was also quite good. For me, the more Seinfeld-ian issues, where the characters are not necessarily doing anything, are the ones I like the most. Two years ago, it was commented, "What is Lobdell doing? It's been four months and nobody has thrown a single punch." Given my druthers, what I would rather do is concentrate even more on the characters. But, if we didn't have the big knockdown, drag-outs, then the more character-driven stuff would not mean as much.

Professor X was revealed as the X-traitor in "Onslaught," but was there a different X-traitor early on?

There have been many X-traitors over the last six years in the sense that, like Bishop, we really didn't know who the X-traitor was. The whole traitor story has been a matter of finding out who it was. Over the years Gambit has been the most likely suspect. There was a time when I thought it was most certainly Rogue. There were clues pointing in the direction of Black Beast. I would have to say, in all honesty, the traitor was always who the traitor was. But we didn't know for sure until it was revealed.

What do you think of your predecessors' work on X-Men?

Dave Cockrum is probably the most unsung hero in the history of X-Men. Chris Claremont's work on the X-Men remains the best. There's no way to overemphasize Chris's work not only on X-Men but for its impact on the entire comic book industry. Chris kept the entire industry alive in the late '70s and early '80s, when there really wasn't a lot of interest in comics. What Chris did for the X-Men is remarkable.

What about the people you're currently working with, pencilers Joe Madureira and Andy Kubert?

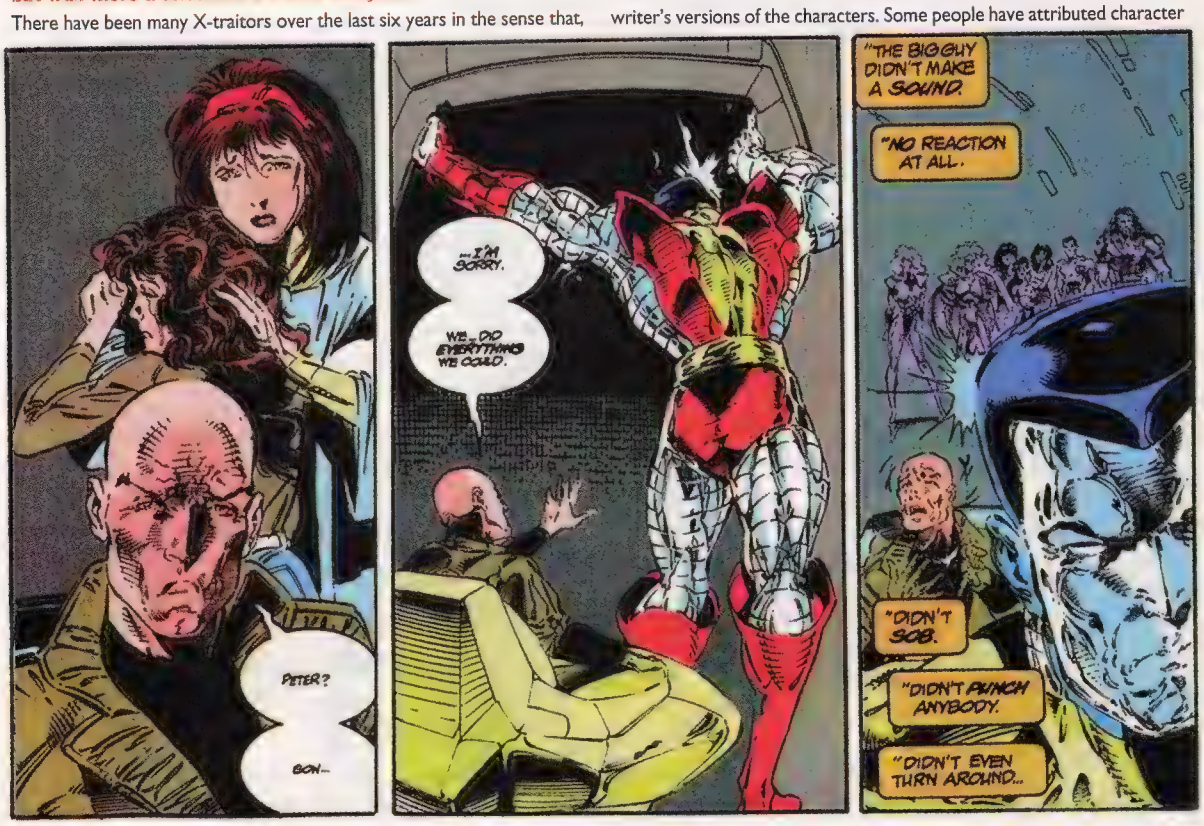
Well, just for the record, Andy's going off *X-Men* and Carlos Pacheco is going to be trying his hand at it. Joe is probably my favorite artist to work with. I know some fans get frustrated by his manga influenced work, but I've found that he's an artist who will take a scene and mine it in terms of characters, expressions, timing and pacing. Andy brought a lot of enthusiasm and energy into his work. Because he was comfortable with the characters, he was able to portray them in a less kinetic, more familiar manner.

How does the art-to-story process work on X-Men and Generation X?

I'm lucky in that I know the artists I'm working with and can write to their work. When you can do that, you're always better off. I know I can write a scene and be certain that Joe is going to capture the emotion of the moment. The same goes with Chris [Bachalo, artist on *Generation X*]. There's not a lot of people in the industry who you can ask to draw carnivorous frogs threatening a bunch of teenage mutants and make the scene appear threatening, exciting and entertaining.

How does it feel to be the only writer on X-Men?

I feel the responsibility. I'm constantly challenged. And sometimes I feel like I'm carrying a heavy weight. Right now I'm finding it exciting in terms of the stories we're doing. In the past, it's been difficult for me to deal with other writer's versions of the characters. Some people have attributed character



traits to these characters that I just don't see. I don't know if the books will be any different under one writer, but at least they will be more consistent.

What are some of the upcoming storylines we can look forward to on the X-books?

Well, the characters in *Uncanny X-Men* are going to be spending some time saving the Shi'Ar empire and there will only be five of the X-Men on hand to do that. Over in *X-Men*, some of the characters will team up with Shang-Chi [Master of Kung Fu] to battle a threat from the Asian underworld that is making a power play against The Hellfire Club. *Generation X* is going to be completely turned on its head when Black Tom Cassidy [Banshee's half-brother] tries to gain custody of the kids from Banshee. It will be a real horrific story with lots of action.

How is writing *Generation X* different from writing the other X-books?

Generation X is different, for want of a better term, because of the backward momentum the book contains. We're constantly finding out new things about these characters because we still have very little awareness of who they are. The characters in this book don't know a lot about each other's pasts, so it's a different book in the sense that, as the story progresses, we're also spending a lot of time investigating the backgrounds of these characters.

Why did you bring back Howard The Duck?

I don't know. Sometimes things just take on a life of their own. We knew Skin and Chamber were on their way to Los Angeles and I knew I had to get them from one end of the country to another. Originally, another character, Ulysses [the Pantheon hero from *The Incredible Hulk*], was supposed to be the truck driver, but Chris [Bachalo, *Generation X*] didn't know who the character was and so, when the truck had to pull up, it just turned out to be Howard The Duck. And once he showed up on panel, it just made sense to put him into the rest of the story.

What's coming up with *Generation X*?

Everybody whose been into those warm touchy-feelie stories about taking tests and going on picnics will be totally devastated by *Generation X* #25, which launches an action-driven story that will turn the team and the book completely upside down. You will see the second-to-final fate of Mondo. Jubilee will be most affected in this story as something happens that will have long term ramifications on her relationship with Wolverine.

After your X-Men work, I would think getting the *Iron Man* gig in "Heroes Reborn" would be a real feather in your cap. How did that assignment come about?

I'd love to say that I was Jim Lee's first choice, but I was actually his second choice after Alan Moore turned the assignment down.

Is Iron Man a character you've always wanted to write?

I've probably always wanted to write every character. With Iron Man I particularly like the way the concept of redemption and finding the worth inside the person has been handled. Iron Man is kind of wounded on the inside and only by being placed in a shell can he come out of *his* shell. So, to a degree, he has become a favorite character as I've gotten into dissecting him and seeing what makes him work.

Was there anything wrong with the way Iron Man was written before you took over the book?

My feeling is that any character should remain unique. If Iron Man is the story of one man trapped by his own creation, that's what the story and series should be about. I don't think Iron Man is about an armory of armors and other people stepping into the armor. I think, over the years, the whole concept has become cluttered, but that's understandable because writers always feel a need to tack on more and more.

You were a stand-up comic before you got into comics?

Yeah. For five years. Between that and my freelance writing work I was making just enough to starve. When I got my first X-Men assignment, I pretty much put the kibosh on the stand-up routine.

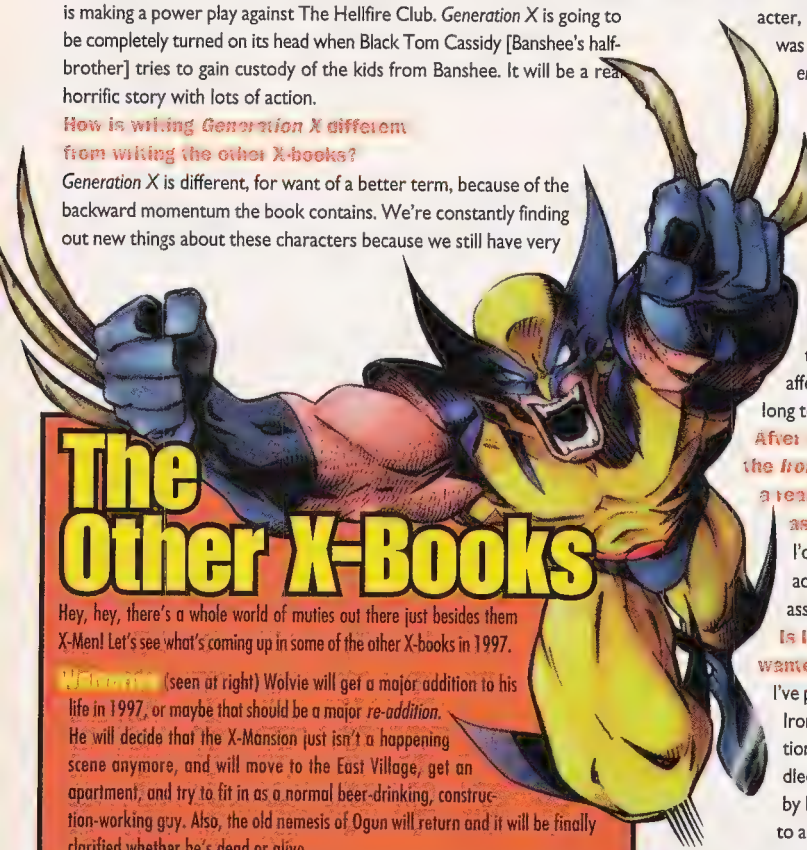
Has anything in your stand-up background helped you in comics?

Stand-up is such an immediate thing. I think that helped, initially, when I was faced with what could be the intimidating factor of having to turn my stories around real fast. When you're a comedian, you have to learn to trust your instincts and I think that helped in making my transition to comics.

Do you work real well under deadline pressure?

I don't think I need deadlines just to get the job done. I happen to be in a place where, usually, everything is always late before it's even written. Deadlines serve a purpose, but they are not some deep psychological thing I have to deal with.

Speaking of dealing with things, I don't think anybody has ever gotten a clear explanation of the falling out between



The Other X-Books

Hey, hey, there's a whole world of muties out there just besides them X-Men! Let's see what's coming up in some of the other X-books in 1997.

Wolverine (seen at right) Wolvie will get a major addition to his life in 1997, or maybe that should be a major *re-addition*. He will decide that the X-Mansion just isn't a happening scene anymore, and will move to the East Village, get an apartment, and try to fit in as a normal beer-drinking, construction-working guy. Also, the old nemesis of Ogun will return and it will be finally clarified whether he's dead or alive.

X-Factor Thanks to a rebirth of mutant hysteria due to "Onslaught," the team will break away from its government sponsorship. Forge will take command and move the team underground, out of the detection of their former government keepers. Realizing that the government meant to make them the mutant-hunting "hounds" of the "Days of Future Past" storyline, Forge will turn the team's direction back towards Professor Xavier's original cause: the peaceful co-existence of mutants and humans.

Since working for the government allowed X-Factor to gather up nasty secrets about them, the team will effectively blackmail the government into sponsoring them in a very hands-off fashion. The government will give the team money and supplies, or else X-Factor will take the secrets to the press.

Also, it will become clear that X-Factor is slowly turning into the X.S.E. of Bishop and Shard's timeline, a fact that will allow Shard to play a larger role in the running of the team.

Excalibur Meanwhile in England, the book, under its new creative team of Ben Raab and Sal LaRocca (*Flash, Ghost Rider*), will shift slightly, turning from conspiracy stories to more X-Men-type action. While nothing is set as of this writing, plans call for a shift in the team's line-up, and more tie-ins to X-Men and Marvel Universe continuity.

X-Men Nate will be interacting with the X-Men a little more, although he's still reluctant to trust them due to his memories of the world he left in the dystopian "Age of Apocalypse" alternate timeline. Through these interactions, Scott and Jean will learn that Madelyne Pryor is alive, and has become a part of the Hellfire Club's Inner Circle, a position Jean herself once held. Madelyne's presence on the Inner Circle is a ramification that will pay out in the X-books for the next few months... ■*Matthew Brady*

At Right: Howard the Duck makes an unexpected (even to Lobdell!) cameo appearence in Generation X

former *X-Men* writer Mark Waid and yourself.

Mark and I have made our peace with each other and I would just as soon leave it at that. The alternative would be to say something overly nice and have it come across as being insincere or to just rehash the other stuff—and I don't see any point in that.

What is your relationship like with X-Men editor and Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras these days?

It's been ever changing as his responsibilities as Editor-in-Chief have changed. The time we do talk is limited and it's more focused on the work than it was before.

As we've been talking, I've been struck by the fact that you seem real low-key. Is that the perfect personality to have in the pressure-packed world of comics?

I don't know if it's the perfect personality or not. My job is to write interesting comic books, reach an audience, say specific things and make my deadlines. I don't really concentrate on the pressure aspects.

So it's as simple as that?

Yes. I'm content to go through life simply doing my best work. I'm not interested in writing a column or sending nasty letters to comic magazines. As much as I enjoy writing the X-Men, *Generation X* and *Iron Man*, I'd have been just as happy to stay on *Alpha Flight* [an early assignment]. Someday, I might find myself working on *Legion of Super-Heroes* and that would be fine, too.

And finally, how much longer would you like to do the X-books?

When I first started, I said, "I hope, when the time comes, somebody will just have the decency to quietly wheel me away from the desk with no fanfare." I think everyone in the industry has seen writers stay too long on a book. As much as I would like to, I doubt I will be the one to make the decision when I go. But I think, eventually, someone will let me know when I've overstayed my welcome. I don't see myself staying on the X-books forever. I'm not going for any records. W

Marc Shapiro, who profiles Mark Hamill on the back page, wants to thank the person who quietly wheeled him away from his desk with no fanfare. But you forgot his burrito and he wants it back!

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A LOOK AT EIGHT ARTISTS TO KEEP YOUR EYES ON

Michael Turner

Being fast and lucky go hand in hand when you're trying to smash down the doors of Comic Book Heaven. Just ask Michael Turner, the pencil power behind *Witchblade*, who has fast in his genes. But luck? You better believe it.

"The guy drawing backgrounds on *Cyberforce* was really terrible and didn't get along with anybody, so they called me," says the 25-year-old Marina Del Rey, Calif., resident as he counts up his four-leaf clovers. "If the guy on *Cyberforce Origins: Stryker* had not been behind, I would never have had a chance to draw that. Then *Witchblade* came along when I had absolutely nothing else to do. Yeah, I'd have to say I'm lucky."

Turner, who has also fattened up on such titles as *Codename: Stryke Force* and *Ballistic*, has risen in the ranks so fast that he's at a loss as to the particulars of the talent that brought him to the dance.

"The only thing I have in the way of style is the way I see things," offers the Tennessee native whose spare time is taken up with "driving fast and dating." He narrows it down a bit more: "What I do just sort of evolved from having to draw stuff quickly. I'm sure I learned something from every book I've worked on, but at this point, I've just put the books away and I'm trying to do my own thing." He notes that while he frequently practiced drawing throughout high school, he's had no formal training, and had to quit the only art class he took when he joined Top Cow.

Turner, a former martial arts instructor with Bruce Lee-level skills, fell into comics in 1993 when a friend of his mother's took him to a local comic book show. "I had never read comics before, but I went to that show and got hooked. It was two weeks before the San Diego Con and this friend of my mom's suggested I draw up some pages."

By Turner's own recollection, "My work was terrible, really horrible. But I met David Wohl from Top Cow at the con, and he said my stuff wasn't too bad for two weeks [of work], and that I should do some more and send it to him."

Shortly thereafter, Turner broke his ankle in a martial arts-related accident and, with lots of free time, knocked out six new pages of his work. Top Cow bit and, after a fairly short apprenticeship on the aforementioned books and some dues paid on pin-ups and trading cards,

Turner got his break, his first full penciling job on *Codename: Stryke Force* #14.

"I was in the Top Cow Studios almost 24 hours a day," recalls Turner. "I even slept here a lot of times. I wanted to be here when Marc [Silvestri] walked in in the morning and I wanted to still be here when he left at night."

The artist claims that his martial arts background and athletic build make him the perfect contestant for the long-departed quiz show "What's My Line." "I'm not the stereotypical comic book guy. I don't look like what I do."

And martial arts has given Michael Turner more than athletic prowess. He's steadfast in the fact that it's given him the perfect work ethic to survive in the jungle that is comics. "You've got to get it done right, fast and monthly," he offers as advice to budding comic book hopefuls. "You've got to constantly bombard people with your stuff. Because if you're gone for three months, everybody will forget you."

Jeffrey Moy

Jeffrey Moy would love a personal life. But the social fates, at least to this point, have not been real kind to the artist behind *Legionnaires*.

"Personal life? What personal life? I don't draw that fast, so I don't get out much."

Moy, 27 and a Chicago burbs resident, has received good word of mouth largely on the strength of his subtle blending of American and Japanese styles on *Legionnaires*. His backlog prior to that book—five issues of the Comico horror anthology *Splatter*, eight pages of fill-in work on *Superboy* and *Excalibur*, and a trading card for WildStorm—is admittedly on the slim side. "I haven't done much, which is why it's neat to get any kind of recognition. My attitude is take it where I can get it. I haven't got anything else coming up at the moment, but I'm open to cards, pin-ups, anything. If the telephone rings, I'm there."

Growing up, Moy read such mainstays as *Fantastic Four* and *Amazing Spider-Man*. "I was basically a Marvel zombie until *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* came along, and then I got into Superman and basically went back and forth between Marvel and DC."

Moy cracked the comic book curtain in the time-honored manner of going to cons and bombarding editors with samples. His talent was what ultimately landed him the phone call that offered up *Legionnaires*. But it's been his realistic attitude that has kept

Michael Turner (at left) applies his martial-arts training to drawing Witchblade (below)

Jeffrey Moy (above, bottom) is drawing characters he grew up with in *Legionnaires*

him on the cusp of popularity.

"If you think you're going to jump right into drawing X-Men and make millions, then you're going to be disappointed," he says. "You have to be really dedicated to be in this profession. Before you develop a style, you have to develop reliability. That's why I'm dedicating myself to letting people know that, if they put me on a monthly book, they'll get their book on time."

It also helps his reliability batting average that, in *Legionnaires*, he's working on a book that never gets old. "For me, it all depends on the characters and the stories. There's such a diverse group of characters in this book, that I never get tired of drawing them. *Legionnaires* is a fun book to do. I like where the storylines are going and, [like] *Legion of Super-Heroes*, it was one of the books I regularly read growing up, so it's kind of like old-home week."

The artist is so caught up in establishing a professional identity that he admits to being at a loss when asked to find something inherently funny about working in the industry. "Funny? I don't know. I guess bitching to my friends about how rough I have it in having to get up each morning and go all the way to the next room is a hoot."

Moy, however, is never far away from the serious, dedicated course he's chosen for himself. "Getting paid to do this isn't so much funny as it is damned lucky. I'm doing what I want to do and I'm getting paid for it. I'm thrilled to be in comics."

Steve Skroce

When it comes to a personal life, Steve Skroce has the same problem that Jeffrey Moy has. "But that sounds pretty sad," chuckles the 23-year-old Vancouver, Canada, resident who currently holds the reins on Marvel Comics' bucking bronco known as *Amazing Spider-Man*. "Let's just say that I party a lot and have a lot of girlfriends."

Skroce, who has also wielded his mighty pencil on the likes of *Cable* and *X-Man*, is a well-balanced mixture. On the one hand he's a realistic artist, dedicated to learning as much as he can about the art form. On the other hand...

"One of the best things about drawing comics for a living is that I get to work in my underwear," roars Skroce. "I mean, who doesn't like to be *au natural* when they work?"

Skroce has been sending out samples since he was in the eighth grade. "Basically forever," he recalls. "One month, I even came up with the dumb idea of sending candy bars along with my submissions. That was the one month that I didn't get any replies, which means they were probably intercepted in the mail room and never reached the editors."

The artist finally realized that shoe leather was more potent than sugar and traveled to the San Diego Con in 1993, where he talked up editors and, a month later, crashed the big casino when Marvel asked him to do its fledgling title, *Ectokid*, for the Clive Barker Universe. Skroce sandwiched in a story for DC's *Showcase* and a couple of issues of Malibu's *The Strangers*, while continuing on *Ectokid*.

"Then I got a letter one day telling me *Ectokid* had been canceled. I thought, 'Oh no. What am I going to do?' I ended up taking my last few bucks and crashing with a friend in New York. I went into Marvel to see if they had anything else for me to do, and it turned out they were looking for somebody to draw *Cable*. A fill-in for *X-Man* led to regular *X-Man* work, and then I was offered *Amazing Spider-Man*."

The Spider-series keeps Skroce working seven days a week, so the artist really doesn't have much time to pick up the chores on another title, although he does

Steve Skroce (below left), a Spidey rookie, says he likes drawing comics because "I get to work in my underwear"

Jim Calafiore (below right), whose clean style is seen in *Aquaman* and *What If?* (right), would love to get a regular book (Listening, editors?)

Sue Goldman

have some possibilities in mind. "I wouldn't mind doing *Batman* or *The Hulk*, but then everybody says that. I mean, when was the last time anybody said they wanted to do *Blue Devil*?" he laughs.

Skroce the realist knows his regular, high-profile work is a combination of luck and talent. "Luck got me the jobs. Talent and reliability have allowed me to keep them. This is admittedly a strange job, drawing monthly fantasy stories. But if I wasn't doing this, I'd probably be a crew chief at Kentucky Fried Chicken, so I've got no complaints."

Especially when his relative isolation in the wilds of Vancouver allows him to work alone. "I've always worked best alone. I guess I could work in a studio situation if I had to, but all I can think of is that underwear thing again. The idea of a bunch of guys sitting around in a studio, drawing in their underwear, seems real sick to me," he laughs.

Jim Calafiore

Jim Calafiore is not what you would consider a hard-sell type of guy. When he toots his own horn, it's news. Well, get those banner headlines ready, because...

"I'm fast," exclaims the 33-year-old New Jersey native. "I do about a page and a half a day. Normally, I wouldn't find it necessary to let people know that, but I feel I have to get the word out because there's a lot of people who think I'm not fast enough to do a book."

Point of fact: Calafiore is fast enough and good enough to do many books, including, currently, *Aquaman* and a Juggernaut *What If?* issue. It's a plus at a time when work is scarce but, as the straight-shooting Calafiore admits, it can also be a bit of a curse. "I tend to bounce around a lot. In a sense, I'm a journeyman, but I'd prefer not to be. I'd love to have a regular book. But, at this point, I'm hit and run. I get in, I get out and I give the editor whatever he needs."

And what editors can count on when Calafiore is on the case is a style that, as explained by the artist, is no style. "I don't know if any artist is totally original. I can tell you that I don't look like my favorite people. I tend to concentrate on a lot of black-and-whites in my work and I've always been real big on clarity in my storytelling."

Calafiore's entry into the comic book biz was through Caliber Press in a short tale for *Caliber Presents*. He followed with a graphic horror novel called *Progeny*, a mini-series called *God's Hammer* and a knights-of-the-round-table take called *Camelot Eternal*, all for Caliber. He next bounced over to Valiant, where his most consistent work, simultaneous duty on *Magnus, Robot Fighter* and *Armorines*, took place. Calafiore moved on to Marvel and DC, where he has lengthened his comic rap sheet with work on *Force Works*, *Fantastic Four Unplugged*, *Iron Man* and *Aquaman*.

"I feel lucky that I'm able to work as regularly as I do because, these days, nobody is dumb enough to leave a book. So, a lot of times, I tend to get thrown into a book that has a problem or is behind schedule. Being in those situations is fine with me, but I'd be lying if I said I didn't want something more."

And lying is not something that Calafiore does a lot of. "I'm totally honest. My attitude is, 'Why waste time making excuses?' I'd like to think I'm a no-bull kind of guy. I stick to commitments and I've only missed deadlines because of acts of God. Or when I've decided to go on vacation. Vacations are things I don't put off."

Calafiore's struggles to find consistent happiness in the upside-down world of comics are tempered by the fact that he ultimately loves the madness. "Everything about comics is crazy. It's great, but it's all crazy."

Lee Moder

Lee Moder spent more time in the principal's office than the principal. He was told that he would never get anywhere doing what he was doing. What Moder was doing was doodling in class, and so now he's got a few choice words for his former principal.

"All I can say now is ha ha ha," chuckles Moder, who is having the last laugh by turning his doodling obsession into a full-blown comic artist career that, to date, has seen the 27-year-old Pittsburgh native championing the cause of *Wonder Woman*, *Batman*, *Barb Wire* and *Legion of Super-Heroes*.

"I'm your basic workhorse comic book artist," says Moder. "I'm the type of guy who will sit on a book for a few years, get a nice big block of issues under my belt and then move on to something else. Working this way has worked out great so far, because I'm getting to do the kind of work I want to do."

Moder is one of those comic types who was born to the profession, deciding on his life's work at age 7—he would regularly create 10- to 12-page Spider-Man stories out of thin air—and begin-

Class clown Lee Moder (left) gets the last laugh as the regular penciler of *Legion of Super-Heroes* (above)

ning to send out submissions at age 14. He continued sending out submissions through most of his tenure at "a college some wacky nuns put together," where he was pursuing a graphic arts degree.

"Somehow a handful of my pages got into the hands of Sharon Cho at Star*Reach [the comic artist agency], and I got a call from her asking if she could represent me. A month later, she called me with my first gig, a one-shot for Malibu called *The Arrow*."

Moder's phone kept ringing, to the tune of a fill-in on *Legion* and a regular gig on *Wonder Woman*. Hit with this kind of success so soon, most people would have dumped college for the real world. But Moder persisted in finishing his senior year and getting his degree.

"It would have been pretty stupid to bail on school at that point. I knew I could finish this off, get a degree and get a lot of great portfolio pieces done. I wanted to come to the table fully armed."

Moder's insistence on "being prepared" resulted, in pretty quick order, in his snagging jobs on the Batman graphic novel *The Last Angel*, the first issue of Dark Horse's *Barb Wire* and the regular gig on *Legion of Super-Heroes* beginning with #62.

"I have a real skewed vision of reality," laughs Moder as he attempts to explain the style that has landed him some prestigious work. "I like to inject a lot of playfulness and a lot of silly things. I'm big on pulling and tweaking characters. Basically, I try to draw a comic book the way I would shoot a movie."

Moder has no idea what the future will bring, but he does know one thing: His parents will always be in his corner. "It's really funny. Even when I was getting dragged off to the principal's office, they would always support me. They felt I was going to make something out of what I was doing. These days, my dad is always on my case. He always wants to know when I'm going to get the new comp issues, and he wants to make sure I sign them.

"He knows a collectible when he sees one."

Cary Nord

Cary Nord was just "blown out of the water" when he found out that *Wizard* had chosen to recognize his talents in this article. And the reason is that the candid pencil pusher behind the likes of *Daredevil* and *Ghost Rider* is far from convinced that he's actually arrived.

"My stuff isn't totally together," laughs the 23-year-old Calgary, Alberta, native. "I'm still learning the tricks of the trade. I'm still late on occasion and I'm still learning about layouts. It's still on-the-job training for me at this point."

Being a raw rookie, however, has not gotten in the way of Nord establishing a rather substantial sheet of work, although he admits to being at a loss as to just what his style is. "I try to make my art very realistic-looking. I'd like to think what I do is kind of wild and exaggerated, but I don't really know exactly what it is I'm doing."

Nord made his first attempt at cracking the world of comics during his first year at the Alberta College of Art. "I did six pages of Conan the Barbarian and sent it out to about nine different companies. I thought what I was doing at the time was okay, but looking back on it now, it really wasn't that much."

But Nord concedes now that "it must have been a hell of a submission at the time," because a month later, DC called up with the offer of "The Kobra Kronicles" series for *Showcase '93*. "Talk about luck," he laughs. "The artist they had been using on the book came up with some disease and my package was the first stuff that came across the editor's desk."

Marvel made a belated call some months later and Nord quickly found himself on the receiving end of *Marvel Comics Presents* #156-#158, some Conan pin-ups and his first big break on the *Ghost Rider: Crossroads* one-shot.

"Everybody had been supportive to that point, but nobody had thought it would happen. But, as soon as I got the *Ghost Rider* thing, I was suddenly working every day. At that point, I thought, 'Wow! This is a job!' "

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He continued to bounce back and forth between Marvel and DC, guiding the fortunes of Bruce Wayne in Amalgam's *Bruce Wayne: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D*, before taking up the monthly cause of the recently revamped *Daredevil*, where he continues to toil.

Nord cites Marc Silvestri as his first artistic influence, followed by a later introduction to Frank Frazetta and the EC horror artists. That background leads him to liking *Daredevil* for reasons seldom found among superhero artists. "I really enjoy the civilian stuff the best," he says. "I like drawing suits and regular people. My goal is to make it as lifelike and realistic as possible."

Nord knows that he's got a lot to learn, and he's willing to take the time on *Daredevil* to learn it. "I'm going to take this opportunity to learn all I can about my trade before I think about doing anything else. I'm finding out that you have to be able to spend a lot of time by yourself in order to get real good at what you're doing. I've learned to be patient. And that's the way you have to be when you want to learn."

As Cary Nord (below) climbs to the top, his style raises eyebrows on *Daredevil*

Ian Churchill

Ian Churchill recently left a long-running pencil duty on *Cable* and is currently, according to the 27-year-old English artist, "in between things right now." Being in between things is not an uncommon condition for Churchill, though. In fact, being in between things is how Ian Churchill got into comics."Comics? I got into them totally by accident," acknowledges the Chicester, England-native Churchill in his trademark matter-of-fact tones. "I lost my job as a graphics designer during a recession and I wasn't having any luck getting design work."

But fate took a hand when Churchill, on a whim, bumped into Bob Harras at a convention and struck up a conversation. Churchill, who had taken an informal stab at drawing comics around age 16 before moving on to what was perceived as more adult pursuits, showed Harras his six-year-old samples and was encouraged to send some other things to the editor in New York. "I went home and cobbled some pages together, and sent them off to Harras on the off chance that I would get some work. I was totally in the dark about comics. I didn't even know who Bob Harras was."

And so, Churchill was happily surprised when Harras rang him up and offered him his first paying job, a Beast back-up story for *X-Men Annual* (vol. 2) #2. A shot at *Excalibur* followed, with another *X-Men Annual* and some work on 1994's *Deadpool* miniseries afterwards.

"It's quite funny to look back on those early books now," offers Churchill, "because my style has changed so drastically. Back then, what I was doing was very basic. My characters looked bendy, rubbery and *very* cartoony. After a while, I chiseled and beefed up my approach to drawing, but before *Deadpool*, what I was doing was pretty laughable."

As his style matured, Churchill became the recipient of his first consistent assignment. A fill-in shot on *Cable* #20 so impressed the higher-ups that, after the much-publicized "Age of Apocalypse" storyline, Churchill was given the book on a regular basis. He held the job until *Cable*

Ian Churchill (above) admits drawing characters like Cable and Hulk "is not a chick magnet"

IT'S A CLASSIC STORY:
Boy meets Mask.
Boy becomes Mask.
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Lobo cuts off Mask's head.
Mask rips Lobo limb from limb.
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#39, when he departed from the book. "It got to the point where I felt like I was treading water with the book. It wasn't giving me the buzz it used to, so I felt it was time to leave."

Churchill continues to be surprised with the speed that the comic book industry turns things out. "It's been easy to meet deadlines because of my graphic design background. I've speeded [my drawing] up to the point where I actually have a bit of a personal life, but for the most part, when everybody's out enjoying themselves, I've got to be working."

But don't feel too sorry for Churchill. He does get out to the pubs on occasion. And he does find himself around the opposite sex. He laughs, however, at the notion that his status in the comic book world is a lure for the fairer sex.

"Being in comics in England is not a chick magnet," he laughs. "It's not the big deal here that it is in America. So when I'm chatting up a woman, I usually tell her I do something else or don't tell her anything at all. I'm not ashamed of what I do; it's just that what I do can be real hard to explain."

Carlos Pacheco

Talk about your tough decisions! Carlos Pacheco had every comic book artist's worst nightmare the night he was hunched over his drawing board, trying to make a deadline on *Excalibur* #96.

"I was scared! I was scared to *death*!" says the normally subdued 33-year-old artist. "I had a wife in the hospital about to give birth to my son and a book at home waiting to be finished. My heart wanted to be with my family, but my head told me to be professional. I finished the book, then I went to the hospital. Everybody does it that way, don't they?" [*Laughs*]

That Pacheco, a former biology teacher turned Spain's hot comic book talent export, was seriously weighing his decision says a lot about the mild-mannered pro who has turned the wheels on the likes of *Flash*, *Fantastic Four* and *X-Men*. Pacheco, with his young son crying in the background, extols the virtues of the influences of

Miguel Lara

Though Carlos Pacheco is gearing up for *X-Men*, it was his three-issue tour on *Fantastic Four* (below) that turned heads

Neal Adams, Gil Kane, John and Sal Buscema, and Howard Chaykin on his drawing and, by association, what he offers up as his pro attitude.

"I spend a lot of time on every page," he offers. "I feel obligated to continue the tradition of comics quality that I remember from my childhood. It is a tough task. I spend many hours on every page. But then, that is my job."

Pacheco grew up on a wide variety of European comic books that included *Tin Tin*, *Metal Hurlant* and *Cinco Infinito*. But his emerging drawing talents met their muse the day he picked up his first Marvel book. "When I started reading American comics, it was like I discovered a whole new universe. Suddenly, for me, comics had a different magic, a different touch. I was absolutely astonished."

The artist took his first step away from teaching and toward a comic book future when he contacted Europe's Planet Comics, which was publishing the Marvel UK books. His first work for Planet, and his first published work, was a six-issue mini-series called *Dark Guard*. When Marvel UK went belly up, Pacheco, whose work had been making the rounds of U.S. publishers by this time, received a call from editor Brian Augustyn at DC with the offer of some work on *The Flash*. Carlos did four issues before Marvel chimed in with the offer of pencil work on *Bishop*. In short order, *Bishop* begot *Starjammers*, *X-Universe*, *Excalibur*, *Fantastic Four* and, most recently, *X-Men*.

"It's tough for artists in Europe to crack American comics, especially superhero books," he says, no small sense of confidence in his voice. "But I always had the strange idea that if the editors of American books saw my work, they would call me."

Pacheco echoes the words of his peers when he talks about juggling the hard work that comics require with the joy of doing something he truly loves.

"Comics is a very hard task, and you often have to search long and hard to find the humor in the process. But ultimately it is a labor of love. I'm working on the characters that are true friends of mine. I'm living the impossible dream." W

Marc Shapiro, who interviewed Mark Hamill elsewhere in this issue, just realized that eight to the four is really 4,096. (Additional reporting by Craig Shutt.)

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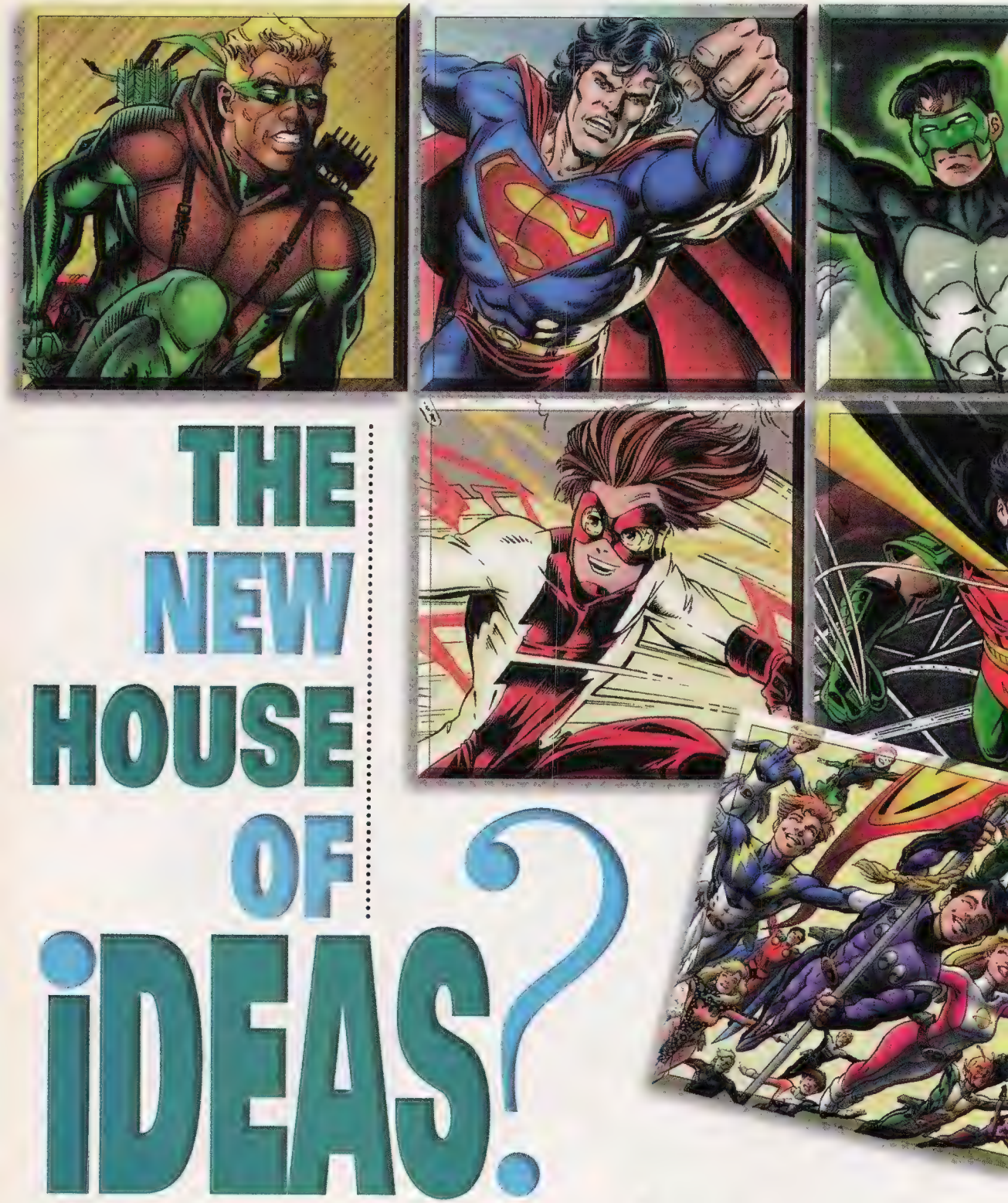
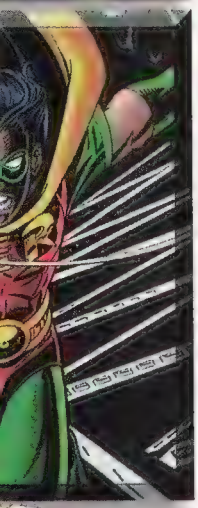


THE NEW HOUSE OF iDEAS?

DC Comics has proven to be #2 only in sales, producing the best superhero comics on the market today

By Tom Russo



OKAY, FANBOYS, get those notebooks ready and those pencils sharpened, because school's in session and DC Comics has got a lesson for you: They're nobody's—repeat, nobody's—"Distinguished Competition."

Now if you want to keep hold of just the first part of that old Marvel-coined moniker, well, that's another story. The way many see it, DC's line of core superhero titles has indeed distinguished itself over the past few years. DC is still #2 to Marvel, which controls the market with a nearly 40 percent share (DC has about 25 percent), and its X-Men-related titles dominate industry Top-20 lists. But despite this, through a remarkably consistent combination of top-flight writing, bold story content and sound editorial philosophy, DC has been producing the best superhero comics of the '90s. And fans have taken notice.

THE MOST POTENT WEAPONS in DC's arsenal are undoubtedly its writers. As DC's stories have continued to impress, fans have heightened their focus on those who tell them: talents like Peter David (*Aquaman*), Chuck Dixon (*Robin*), Dan Jurgens (*Superman*), Karl Kesel (*Adventures of Superman*, *Superboy*), Ron Marz (*Green Lantern*) and Mark Waid (*The Flash*).

If there's been any "trick" to latching onto A-list writers, says DC executive editor Mike Carlin, it has simply been to recognize solid storytelling in all forms and genres. DC staffers, in other words, can look at Garth Ennis' work on an unconventional title like *Hellblazer* and see the potential for a mainstream success like *Hitman*. Similarly, says Carlin, "When I've encouraged artists, people like Jerry Ordway and Karl Kesel, to write, it was because it was clear that they already understood pacing and drama. They understood how to edit down stories and emphasize the right elements."

Then there are staffers like the late Neal Pozner, editor of the aptly titled *Showcase*, who Carlin remembers making almost a second full-time job out of nurturing and encouraging potential new talent. Many of those prospects—like *Catwoman* penciler Jim Balent and *Green Lantern* penciler Darryl Banks—have gone on to contribute to DC's current success. Although Pozner was in his own class, Carlin says, "every editor has their pet, their favorite new guy, who they hope will be the one who enables them to say, 'I put [the next] Frank Miller out there.' "

Of course, keeping standout creators in the fold once you've recruited/discovered/cultivated them can be somewhat complicated. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but a nice fat offer to write a competitor's flagship title ranks a close second. Still, one reason why DC's writing pool runs so deep is that freelancers almost always keep a hand in the DC Universe even while exploring other options. And lately, they seem to be exploring those options for shorter and shorter durations.

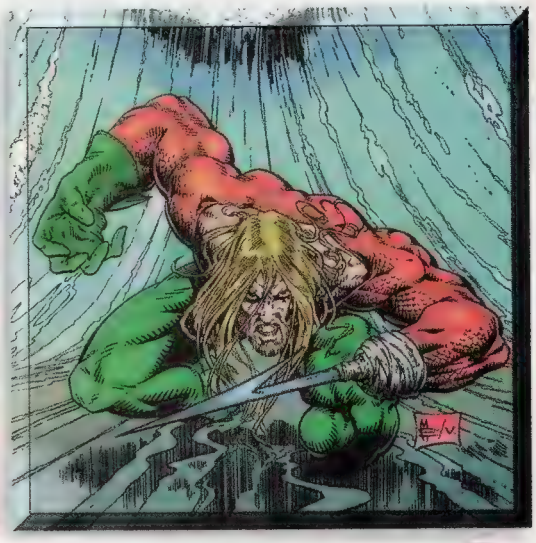
When DC's *Flash* and *Impulse* began to take off under Waid's guidance, Marvel raced faster than both speedsters combined to get Waid on its books. He was given a free hand to jump-start *Captain America*, with offers to take over *X-Men* and *The Avengers* quickly following. Soon after, Kesel was called in to get Marvel's *Daredevil* on track, garnering a similarly strong response. Marvel essentially launched *Sensational Spider-Man* as a showcase for Jurgens. And fans didn't even need to see a printed copy to go buzz-wild over Ennis' new scripting gig on Image Comics' *The Darkness*.

But, again, somehow these talents all seem to gravitate back to DC, that old "family feeling" welling up stronger than ever. Waid—still a must read on *Flash* after more than 60 issues—eventually had the rug yanked out from under him on *Captain America* courtesy of the "Heroes Reborn" relaunch, and his stint on *X-Men* was shorter still because of cited creative differences. Jurgens—entering his eighth year on Superman—exited *Sensational Spider-Man* seven issues into his run because of a disagreement with the book's editorial direction.

"I think DC should be proud that people feel so comfortable doing work for them," Marz says. "People feel like they'll get a fair shake, whereas at other places, you're just never sure."

Adds Jurgens: "When I stopped drawing *Superman* on a regular basis, it was because I had been almost exclusively with DC for something like 12 years, and I wanted to stretch and try some different things. So I did *Superman* and *Sensational Spider-Man* at the same time. I mean, the chance to work on Spider-Man is one that I think anybody would jump at. But they were very different environments. When I did *Zero Hour* [for DC], the idea for the story came first, then *later* we decided there would be a bunch of zero issues that would reintroduce the characters. With Marvel, I've always gotten the feeling that there's a calculated marketing decision made first."

SOME OF THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCES between DC and Marvel are also some of the most subtle. At both companies of late, a mandate that creators do something fresh and original with traditional superhero concepts has often been interpreted to mean "Let's stick a new guy in the old familiar suit."



Opposite page: The "new DC" with (clockwise from upper left) Green Arrow, Superman, Green Lantern, Robin, Legion of Super-Heroes, and Impulse

This page: Flash (left) and Aquaman

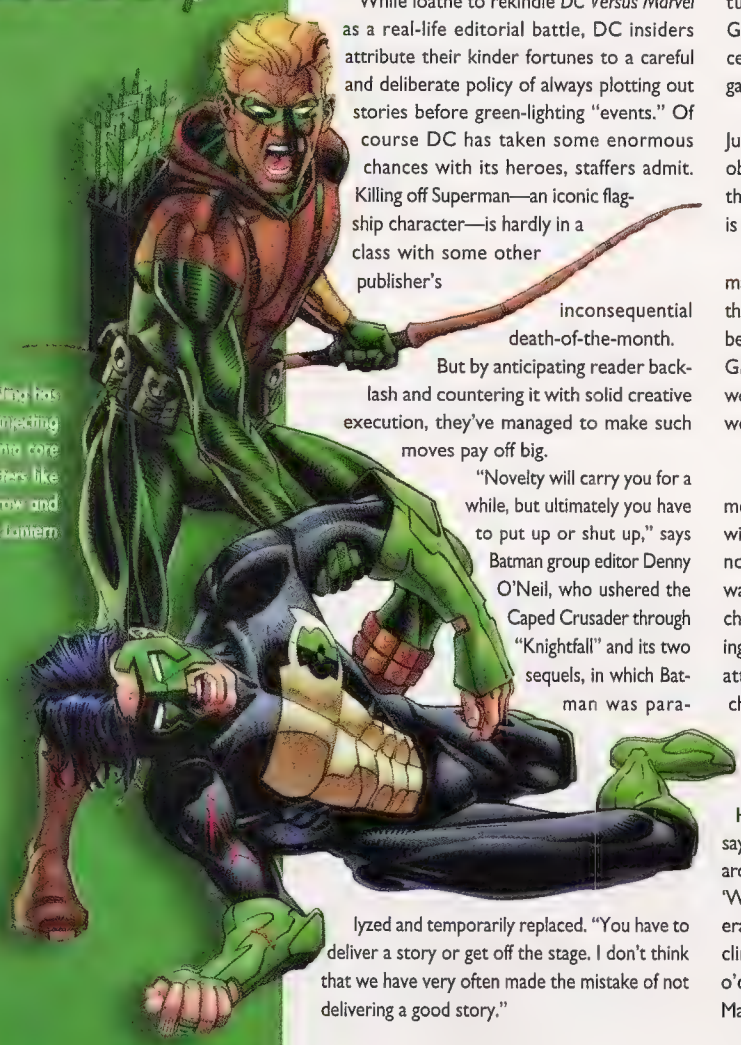
"I don't think that we have very often made the mistake of not delivering a good story."

Marvel tried it unsuccessfully on both Iron Man and Thor. DC, by contrast, has survived and thrived on the philosophy of "out with the old, in with the newly repackaged." They've made it all work through characters like Kyle Rayner, the everyman who became Green Lantern after former GL Hal Jordan descended into madness; Conner Hawke, the illegitimate teenage son of Green Arrow, who strapped on the quiver after his father was killed; Tim Drake, who became the new Robin despite the uneasy knowledge that his predecessor had been murdered by the Joker; and Azrael, who assumed the mantle (but not the morals) of a paralyzed Batman.

Without question, though, the highest profile shake-ups in this mini-genre have been DC's "Death and Return of Superman" storyline and Marvel's Spider-Man "Clone Saga." On the face of it, both companies appear to have charged into these projects with the same attention-grabbing intent. Yet, where DC met with overwhelming success, Marvel alienated longtime fans and was left backpedaling away from what was an admitted major misfire. Spider-Man fans disliked the "new guy" so much, in fact, that many quit the web-slinger cold turkey.

While loathe to rekindle *DC Versus Marvel* as a real-life editorial battle, DC insiders attribute their kinder fortunes to a careful and deliberate policy of always plotting out stories before green-lighting "events." Of course DC has taken some enormous chances with its heroes, staffers admit. Killing off Superman—an iconic flagship character—is hardly in a class with some other publisher's inconsequential death-of-the-month. But by anticipating reader backlash and countering it with solid creative execution, they've managed to make such moves pay off big.

"Novelty will carry you for a while, but ultimately you have to put up or shut up," says Batman group editor Denny O'Neil, who ushered the Caped Crusader through "Knightfall" and its two sequels, in which Batman was paralyzed and temporarily replaced. "You have to deliver a story or get off the stage. I don't think that we have very often made the mistake of not delivering a good story."



DC's gambling has paid off by injecting youth into core characters like Green Arrow and Green Lantern

Adds Carlin, who edited the "Death and Return of Superman" storyline: "At every Superman meeting we've had since I started at DC, whenever we get stuck for ideas, somebody hollers out, 'Let's kill 'im!' And so one time when we were *really* stuck, I said, 'Okay. But then what happens?' If you don't ask that second part, the first part is just a stunt."

Point taken. Still, some argue that all the character revamping DC has been doing isn't fundamentally different than what's been done at Marvel, and that across the board, DC is simply dropping new, younger starring characters into its books. "At a glance, it looks like we're doing the same trick a couple of times," Carlin concedes. "But the fact that people are mad about what's happened to Hal Jordan and they're not mad about some other storyline just shows that if you really get past the surface, you'll find that the punchline to each of these stories is different."

For *Green Lantern*'s Marz, replacing a gray-templed Hal Jordan with a hip, twentysomething Kyle Rayner was largely a matter of problem-solving. "I had always felt one of Green Lantern's problems was that Hal was just one of a bunch of guys with the same power and the same costume. The Green Lantern Corps and the Guardians were baggage that detracted from the central character." So Marz dumped GL's baggage and allowed Rayner to be a solo act.

As for the engineering of Superman's death, Jurgens says there was an even more concise objective: "What we tried to do was reaffirm the character of Superman in terms of who he is and what he's about."

Carlin continues, "When we killed Superman and put his emblem on four other people, the whole point was to show that nobody could be as cool as Superman. The motivation with Green Lantern was to see what that power would do to somebody who hadn't had it. There were different goals in mind."

THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER gutsy moves with equally diverse goals. A Superman with long hair? A bit Super-ficial, yes, but proof nonetheless that even after killing him, DC wasn't averse to further tinkering. Looking for changes that cut deeper? Try Aquaman winding up with a harpoon for a hand after a piranha attack, a clever visual representation of the character's new inner gloom.

At times, DC creators have even lost sleep in their determination to change course. The idea behind the Legion of Super-Heroes' ground-zero relaunch two years ago, says editor KC Carlson, was "just to come back around to that basic concept of kids in space and 'Wow, what a bright, shiny future.' But we deliberated about doing it for well over a year." The clincher, Carlson remembers, came "at four o'clock in the morning on a Saturday, when Mark Waid, [writer] Tom McCraw and I were

having a talk at Waid's apartment. We were lying on the floor in the dark, staring at the ceiling, and we came to the realization that we just could not fix the old continuity. That was actually pretty scary." Since then, the "new" Legion has enjoyed a dedicated fan following that's growing steadily.

"There's no idea so crazy that DC won't at least consider it," echoes Chuck Dixon. Some might have scoffed that the concept of Robin ever flying solo was just that—a crazy idea. After all, fans had literally called for the character to be blown up in his previous incarnation a few years earlier. Without "Batman and" stamped above Robin's name on the cover, who would want to read about him? But Dixon had a plan. "I didn't care for Robin as a kid, because he always seemed sort of useless," he says. "I wanted to make him *useful*, someone who would be more active in Batman's life and not just the 'Boy Hostage.' "

As the writer who also sent *Green Arrow* flying off in a new direction, Dixon is quick to affirm that not all DC retoolings are identical. "Tim Drake is really happy in his role as Robin, so I don't think anyone just assumes that he wants to be Batman someday," he says. "Conner Hawke is trying to be what his dad was, but better. His problem is that he doesn't have the ability as a bowman that his father had, so it's almost impossible."

In tackling such material, DC hasn't just blazed trails for the rest of the industry; they've laid down pavement, painted lane lines and built a few off-ramps, too. Without DC's risk-taking, would there ever have been a Spider-Clone story? Maybe. Would Wolverine have been stripped of his adamantium skeleton and mutated almost beyond recognition? Perhaps. Would Iron Man have been replaced by a 19-year-old? Possibly. But not likely on all counts.

Not that DC has always reaped rewards for its dice-rolling. The big hype for Chris Claremont's creator-owned *Sovereign Seven* has fizzled. Bombs like *Extreme Justice* and *Justice League Task Force* practically killed the Justice League franchise, forcing DC to relaunch *JLA* with Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman and the other big guns. New vehicles like *Firebrand* and *Takion* have been canceled. Still, Carlin says, "This is not mathematics. Two plus two does not always equal four. But this is not a bottom-line company. If something is a good and noble try, we'll stick with it for a while even if it's not making the bread for us."

Carlin closes the case with this sage reminder: "I guarantee you that every single comic that is bad in someone's opinion is someone else's favorite. The most acclaimed comics that DC ever published were the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* books that Denny [O'Neil] and Neal Adams did. Two top guys. And the title was canceled for poor sales."

One stumbling block DC staffers admit they often face is the perception—or mis-perception—that their characters are "old." But to the edit team's credit, they've successfully fought that label without going into grim-and-gritty overload. Now as always, the DC Universe serves up heroes with morals and a conscience, smarter characters who sport colorful costumes and are a kick to read.

"Some kids feel that Superman is a dork compared to characters like the Punisher and Wolverine, who *will* kill people," Carlin says. "That's frustrating, because we actually think it's sensible and good and still valid to have a hero who will do everything else he possibly can before resorting to that. We're not going to compromise what Superman is all about just to sell a few extra copies.

"That's why," he continues, "we found a way to show people, 'All right, if you don't care about Superman, this is what the world will be like without him. Here are four guys who all together could not replace him.' And we actually got a lot of kids to think Superman is cool again."

Did anyone ever imagine they'd see a Superman with long hair?

"We're not going to compromise what Superman is all about just to sell a few extra copies."

QUICK, NAME A DC BOOK. Who do you think of first? Characters withstanding, you think of the writer. *Flash*? Mark Waid. *Green Lantern*? Ron Marz. *Aquaman*? Peter David. See a pattern forming?

Not so with most other publishers' books: When fans think of Marvel's *Uncanny X-Men*, wünderkind penciler Joe Madureira's name springs to mind just as readily as writer Scott Lobdell's. *Spawn*? The art of Todd McFarlane is envisioned. *Shi*? Ditto with Billy Tucci. *Ash*? Joe Quesada's pencils and Jimmy Palmiotti's inks.

While DC's art is solid and consistent, it's the writing that attracts attention.

"It's not the case that writing always takes priority over art with us," Carlin says. "But we try not to compromise the stories. When other companies got into flashy art with no substance, DC's total stock in trade was telling a good

story. I'd be foolish not to admit that there's something to the pin-up aspect of Image's success, but we shouldn't Xerox that, because it doesn't work with what we're trying to do. 'Hot artist' doesn't always mean 'good.' "

"I don't think you'll very easily find a 'house style' at DC," adds editor Kevin Dooley, whose books include *Aquaman* and *Green Lantern*. "Whereas with other companies you'll say, 'This is the Marvel style,' or 'This is the Image style.' "

Indeed, DC typically seems less interested in keeping up with trends than in bucking them whenever possible, and with a little luck, setting a few in the process. DC's forays into bloodbaths and "Bad Girl" books (see *Lobo* and *Catwoman*, respectively) are much less frequent and considerably tamer than what's regularly dished up by other publishers. Instead, DC will focus on, say, a push for quality teen superhero comics. Looking for the original proving ground for the launches of *Generation X* or *Gen13*? Try a book like *Robin*.

"I think we go in for more diversity than most other companies," says DC group editor Archie Goodwin. "We treat superheroes in a way that ranges from the very traditional to the very unusual to something like *Starman*, which kind of captures both. One of the catches is that you're not always doing the flavor of the month quite as obviously as other companies. But one of DC's greatest strengths is that if we're trying something, we'll stay with it until people catch on."

IF DC HAS MADE ANY CONCESSION to what's in vogue, it has been to make its heroes more instantly accessible. In years past, new readers were often daunted by the bogged-down continuity of any number of DC Universe titles. Now, though, anyone can hop on board the streamlined *Flash*, *Green Lantern*, *Green Arrow*, or *Legion of Super-Heroes* without feeling like they've just flunked *Wizard*'s CBIQ quiz.

Chalk it up to the heavy fanboy presence over at DC, where even those holding job titles that usually scream "suit" all seem to have an artistic bent. "I started out in the fanzine business and spent years editing and writing comics," notes publisher Paul Levitz. "Jenette Kahn, our editor-in-chief, created kids' magazines before she got here. Most of us have creative backgrounds."

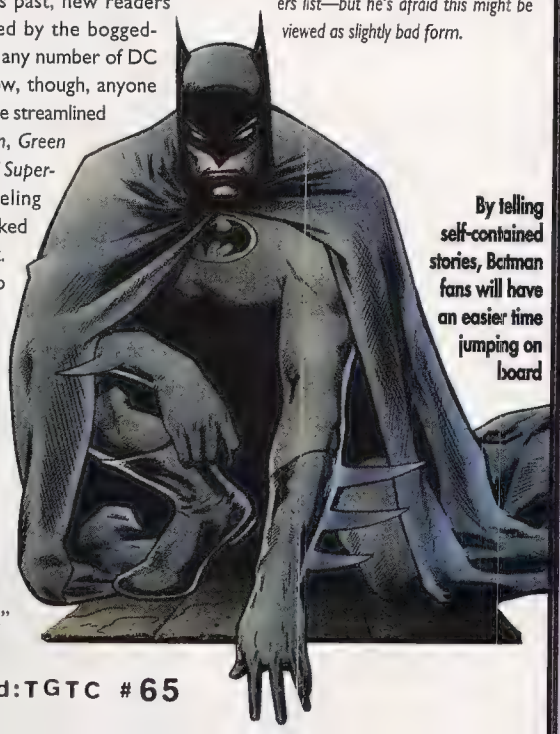
Says Carlin: "I know it's going to look like I'm saying this just because I work here, but the real advantage DC has right now is that from top to bottom, our people are aware of what comic books are, and they love them. I don't know if you can say that about every single company out there, and I believe that's something you can tell from the product. From 'The Death of Superman' on down, I've never been told, 'Come up with the next big thing.' What I've been told is, 'Come up with the next good story.' "

ASK CARLIN AND LEVITZ if they don't harbor even the tiniest urge to K.O. Marvel once and for all, and they both just smile. "Being number one in market share in and of itself isn't particularly important," Levitz says. "It kind of *feels* nice, but it's not like the minute you're number one instead of number two, it changes the business in any exciting or dramatic fashion. And it certainly doesn't change what you're putting out. So we don't measure ourselves against what someone else is, or even against what we ourselves were in the past. We measure each project based on whether it fulfills its own dream."

"It's not an exact science, this comic book biz," Carlin sums up philosophically. "We're going to make mistakes.

"But we're going to make genius moves, too."

Tom Russo is tempted to surreptitiously pencil himself in alongside the guys on Wizard's Hottest Writers list—but he's afraid this might be viewed as slightly bad form.



By telling self-contained stories, Batman fans will have an easier time jumping on board

DC BULLETS

***Wizard* ranks the 10 best DC mainstream superhero books you should be reading. (And, hey, books like *Preacher* and *Sandman Mystery Theatre* don't fit this criteria—but we recommend 'em anyway for those mature types.)**

10) Hitman—Tommy Monaghan is a hired assassin who can read minds (a good ability to have, don'tcha think?). This book never fails to entertain with its snappy dialogue and great situation action and comedy.

9) Aztek—The charm is in the concept: a new character learning the ropes of being both a hero and an American citizen (he spent most of his life in an South American monastery preparing to fight an evil Incan god). A refreshingly fun (yet occasionally dark) look at the standard superhero concept.

8) Aquaman—Aquaman's a hot tempered half-human/half-demon hero, and he's trying to unite the seven underwater cities of Atlantis to fight an oncoming alien invasion. With strong characters that drive the plot, this book is extremely unpredictable. New readers beware: you'll need to prep on a lot of the backstory that's been revealed since the series began.

7) Robin—Focusing on Batman's teenage sidekick, this book has a terrific moral core masked in both high-octane action and moments of dense characterization. When you read it, Robin's problems with high school, his love life and overall teen angst become *your* problems.

6) Impulse—Meet Bart Allen, the grandson of the Silver Age Flash who has super-speed and the attention span of a gnat. Chock full of laughs in both the visuals and situations, *Impulse* can also have a serious side without being grim. When it comes right down to it, this book has fun with the reader.

5) Green Lantern—An everyman hero, the new Green Lantern isn't perfect—and that's what makes this book enjoyable. Though he possesses the greatest weapon in the universe, he makes mistakes—and it makes you root him on even more.

4) Legion of Super-Heroes—Set in the 30th century, this group of interplanetary teen superheroes banded together for peace in the United Planets. Despite having an extremely large cast, this book never loses the reader. All the characters and stories are fresh, fun, exciting and consistently entertaining.

3) Legionnaires—Ditto for this title. We rank this one higher because this half of the team is still in the 30th century (where they belong), while the *LSH* team is stuck in the 20th.

2) Flash—Like Green Lantern, Flash is an everyman hero—but unlike GL, he's been at it a while. Consistently a good read, the stories in this title move as quickly as its star but never pass a reader by. Extremely reader-friendly, you know everything you need to about the cast from the get-go.

1) JLA—This is, bar none, the best team book on the market today. Besides having the best roster in comics, this team book makes the most of how these characters interact with one another. Characterization is dead-on 99 percent of the time, stories are tense and the end of each issue leaves you begging for the next. Can't ask for more than that in a comic.—*Brian Cunningham and Pat McCallum*

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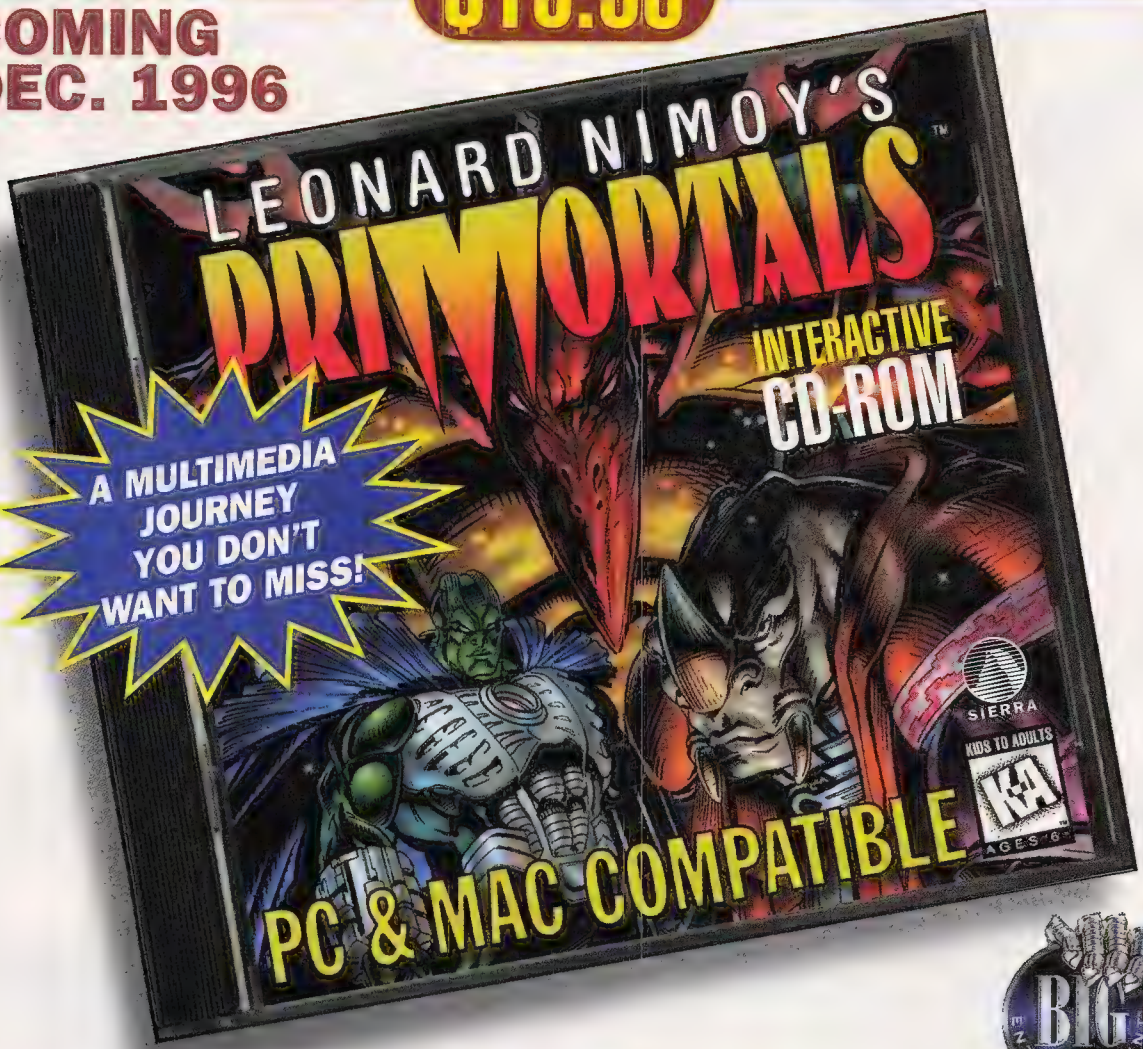

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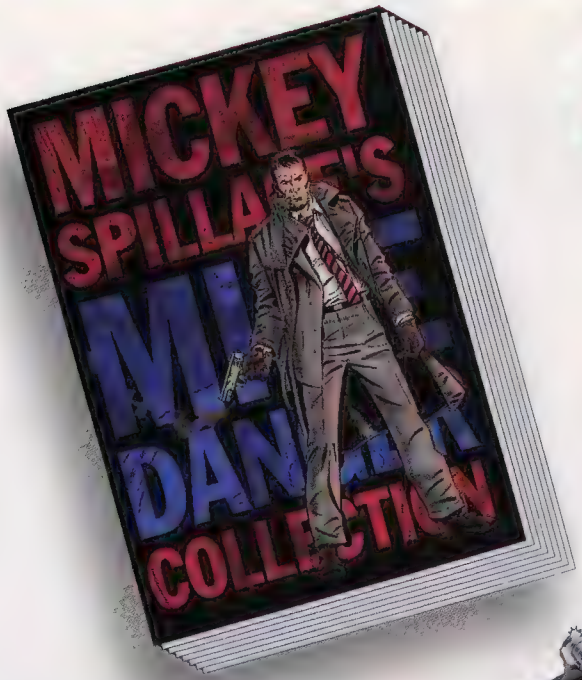

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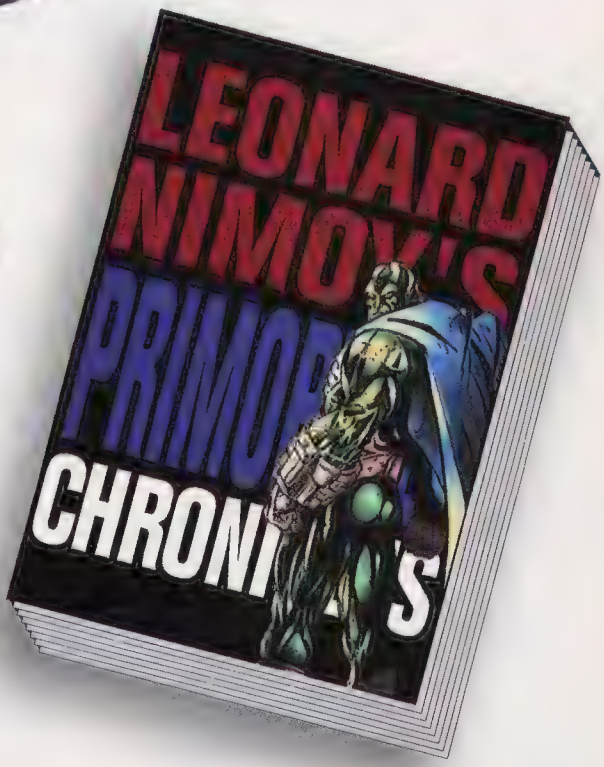

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THY WILL BE DONE

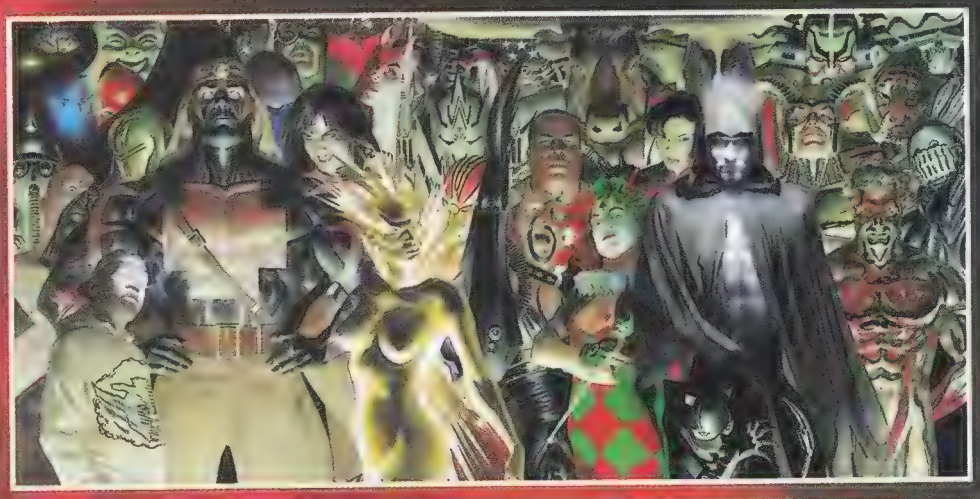
EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT *KINGDOM COME* BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

BY CRAIG KOSTELECKY

IT'S THOSE LITTLE THINGS THAT MAKE IT FUN.

Sure, *Kingdom Come* has a neat premise—old guard superheroes versus the newer, more violent heroes. Yeah, it has a fantastic writer in Mark Waid and a fabulous painter in Alex Ross. But a great deal of the appeal of *Kingdom Come* is the amount of detail put into it, both visually and conceptually. It's a hoot when you see Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids in the background of a panel. It's cool when you find out what the eagle and bat on the first page of #1 *really* symbolize.

So we went to the source—Waid and Ross—to dig up as much info as we could on the less obvious stuff in the four-issue experience. And here's hoping your next reading of *Kingdom Come* can be even more enjoyable than the first!

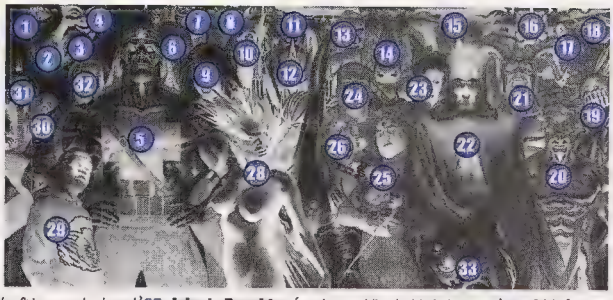


WHO ARE THESE GUYS?

First things first. Since it was never explained in the series, let's go over who all these people are. (Our thanks go out to Skybox for helping us out on this one. Plug: Go out and buy the chock-full-o'-stuff *Kingdom Come Extra* trading card set. You'll be glad you did.)

GO TO PAGE 88 FOR THE ANSWERS.

WHO ARE THESE GUYS? LET'S GET IT ON...



1. **Blue Devil II** *(no longer a human, this indigo demon harkens from the netherworld)* 2. **Shiva the Destroyer** *(four-armed defender of India, based on the Hindu god)* 3. **Judomaster II** *(female inheritor of the mantle)* 4. **Buddha** *(Sumo-sized scourge of China)* 5. **Von Bach** *(Yugoslavian would-be dictator)* 6. **Nuculoid** *(pliable nuclear-powered hero)* 7. **Mr. Terrific II** *(over-equipped update of the old version, with little understanding of his predecessor's motto of "fair play")* 8. **Tusk** *(elephant-shaped man-o-war)* 9. **Nightstar** *(daughter of the late Starfire and the former Nightwing)* 10. **Demon Damsel** *(would-be Legion of Super-Heroes member)* 11. **Pinwheel** *(blade-laden, leather-clad master of pain)* 12. **Cathedral** *(holy terror of the underworld)* 13. **Stars** *(hip-hop, modern Star-Spangled Kid with cosmic rod and belt; note the flag on his shirt is upside-down in issue #1, page 13)* 14. **Manotaur** *(classical Greek myth armed for the future)* 15. **Black Mongul** *(Mongolian shadow of death)* 16. **Kabuki Kommando** *(the Fourth World's Japanese champion)* 17. **Huntress III** *(warrior queen of the African jungle)* 18. **N-I-L-8** *(a sentient armory with an appetite for destruction)* 19. **Trix** *(after "Matrix," a morphing biomechanism)* 20. **Captain Atom** *(human nuclear reactor and symbol of the atomic age)* 21. **Magog** *(Superman's successor as Metropolis' #1 superhuman)* 22. **The Spectre** *(the wandering spirit of God's vengeance)* 23. **Tokyo Rose** *(Japanese martial arts assassin)* 24. **Stripes** *(modern Stripesy armed to the teeth)* 25. **Joker's Daughter** *(one of many to follow the Joker's chaotic style)* 26. **666** *(tattooed, self-mutilated man-machine of destruction)* 27. **Phoebus** *(Firestorm's successor as Earth's fire elemental)* 28. **Lightning** *(daughter of Black Lightning)* 29. **Thunder** *(a new Johnny Thunder with the mischievous spirit of Thunderbolt)* 30. **Swastika** *(American militiaman and anarchist)* 31. **Germ-Man** *(master of biological warfare who spews poison gas)* 32. **Stealth II** *(cloaked one-woman war machine)* 33. **Catwoman II** *(armored meta-human, successor to Selina Kyle)*

1. **Original Red Tornado** *(armored with more than a pot for a helmet)* 2. **Hawkman** *(combining the spirit of the old with the other-worldly flesh of the new)* 3. **Lady Marvel** *(formerly Mary Marvel, caretaker of the power of Shazam)* 4. **King Marvel** *(formerly Captain Marvel Jr., caretaker of the power of Shazam)* 5. **Aleea Strange** *(half-human, half-alien daughter of Adam Strange and Alanna Strange)* 6. **Human Bomb** *(still the same combustible hero of old)* 7. **Midnight** *(a spirit manifesting itself as a living smoke cloud)* 8. **Whiz** *(son of Lady and King Marvel, and natural inheritor of the power of Shazam)* 9. **Captain Comet** *(former L.E.G.I.O.N. member and the first superhero of the Silver Age)* 10. **Bulletman** *(modern steel-coated human bullet)* 11. **Brainiac's Daughter** *(the living computer's human progeny, and ancestor of Brainiac 5)* 12. **Bulletgirl** *(modern steel-coated human bullet)* 13. **Robotman III** *(Victor Stone, formerly Cyborg, now an organism made of liquid metal)* 14. **Starman VII** *(formerly Starboy, from the 30th Century)* 15. **Golden Guardian** *(second body cloned from the original Golden Age shield-bearer, the Guardian)* 16. **Powerman** *(robot minion of Superman)* 17. **Hourman II** *(current inheritor of the mantle with none of the time limits the original Hourman had)* 18. **Sandman III** *(formerly Sandy the Golden Boy, who now doesn't age)* 19. **Red Tornado III** *(fire-haired, wind-manipulating successor to the mantle)* 20. **Living Doll** *(daughter of Doll Man and Doll Girl)* 21. **Tornado** *(reformed spirit of the Tornado Champion)* 22. **Avia** *(Big Barda and Mister Miracle's daughter)* 23. **Atlas** *(legendary demigod figure)* 24. **Atom-Smasher** *(formerly Nuklon, godson of the original Atom)* 25. **Donna Troy** *(formerly Wonder Girl, Troia and Darkstar, now an Amazonian champion)* 26. **The Ray** *(son of the original, and Lord of Light)* 27. **Wonder Woman** *(former Amazonian princess and now Superman's second-in-command)* 28. **Red Robin** *(formerly Nightwing, Dick Grayson, the original Robin, is following in his mentor's footsteps again)* 29. **Norman McCay** *(a preacher and the Spectre's human anchor)* 30. **Red Arrow** *(formerly Speedy, and later Arsenal, now following more closely the methods of his mentor, Green Arrow)* 31. **Superman** *(reluctant leader of the Justice League, now showing his alien nature more and more)* 32. **Aquaman II** *(formerly Aqualad, now inheritor of his mentor's mantle)* 33. **Power Woman** *(formerly Power Girl, and still a major superhuman wrecking machine)* 34. **The Flash III** *(emanating from the Speed Field, Wally West fights crime 24 hours every day at super-speed)* 35. **Green Lantern I** *(merging his lantern into his armor, Alan Scott is the most powerful champion of that name)*

1. **A Bat-Knight** *(one of Batman's robot sentinels)* 2. **Steel** *(has switched his devotion from Superman to Batman, and is accented with his bat-shaped battle ax)* 3. **Menagerie** *(formerly Changeling, and now only able to create the shapes of imaginary beasts)* 4. **Deadman** *(still dead and, after a long time of rejection, loving it)* 5. **Huntress III** *(warrior queen of the African jungle)* 6. **Cossack** *(champion of Russia, from the Batmen of many nations)* 7. **Ace** *(otherworldly bat-hound, and Batwoman's steed)* 8. **Batwoman** *(Batman admirer from the Fourth World)* 9. **John Jones** *(former Martian Manhunter, now has psychological problems)* 10. **Mysteryman** *(one of Batman's fellow crimefighters)* 11. **Zatara II** *(son of the late Zatanna, and grandson of the original Zatara)* 12. **Samurai** *(champion of Japan, from the Batmen of many nations)* 13. **Dragon** *(champion of China, from the Batmen of many nations)* 14. **A Bat-Knight** *(another of Batman's robot sentinels)* 15. **Creeper** *(aging, wretched screwball superhero)* 16. **Nuculoid** *(pliable nuclear-powered hero)* 17. **Wildcat III** *(a man-panther with the original's spirit)* 18. **Lightning** *(Black Lightning's daughter)* 19. **Condor** *(current inheritor of the Black Condor mantle)* 20. **Nightstar** *(half-human, half-alien daughter of Starfire and Nightwing)* 21. **Obsidian** *(son of Alan Scott, the original Green Lantern, and Harlequin)* 22. **Mr. Scarlet** *(blue-collar bruiser, with bright red skin)* 23. **Ralph Dibny** *(formerly the Elongated Man, now just stretched out)* 24. **Spy Smasher** *(independent operative in the post-Cold War world)* 25. **Phantom Lady II** *(a literal phantom of the original)* 26. **Tula** *(seafaring malcontent and daughter of Aquaman II)* 27. **Blue Beetle** *(his high-tech suit of armor incorporates the original scarab's power)* 28. **Red Hood** *(daughter of Red Arrow and the mercenary Cheshire)* 29. **Darkstar** *(son of Donna Troy and is the inheritor of her Darkstar role)* 30. **Flash IV** *(Wally West's daughter)* 31. **Fate** *(the Helmet of Nabu, a talisman that no longer needs a human host)* 32. **Jade** *(daughter of Green Lantern I and Harlequin, and a living battery of the Lantern's power)* 33. **Batman** *(a master strategist, and still the world's greatest detective)* 34. **Captain Marvel** *(under the control of Lex Luthor, the World's Mightiest Mortal quickly becomes the world's mightiest villain)* 35. **Oliver Queen** *(formerly Green Arrow, now married to Dinah Lance, Black Canary II)* 36. **Black Canary III** *(daughter of Oliver and Dinah Queen)* 37. **Dinah Queen** *(formerly Black Canary II)*

KINGDOM COME #1

[NOTE TO READER: We're counting the title page as page one, and every issue's first page with art will be page three.]

Page 3 (at right)

The quotes on the first few pages of this (and every) issue are taken from Revelations, the part of the Bible that talks about the end of the world. Not exactly the best of starts for our heroes.

The first vision experienced by Wesley Dodds, a.k.a. the Golden Age Sandman, is that of an eagle in an aerial fight with a bat. Initially, many thought this represented a battle—real or ideological—between Batman and Superman. Later, it is revealed that this represents a battle—both real *and* ideological—between Batman and Wonder Woman. "[It was] a misinterpretation we did not foresee, but one that delighted me," says writer Mark Waid in the trading card set. "It made Wonder Woman's later role more of a surprise."

Page 8 (below)

In the last couple panels of this page is the cover of *The Daily Planet*. The picture on the cover shows the UN building which was designed after the Hall of Justice from the Hanna-Barbera cartoon, "The Super Friends."

Page 9 (at left)

panel 1

In the first panel, McCoy walks by damaged yellow car whose owner looks suspiciously like Non, one of the three Kryptonian Phantom Zone villains from the movie "Superman 2."

panel 2

McCoy walks by a graffiti splattered wall with the words "Who Watches the Watchmen?" of course, in reference to *Watchmen*, the acclaimed 1985-87 mini-series from DC.

panel 3

The statue of Lady Justice has crashed into the antique shop "Knight's Past" owned by Jack Knight, star of DC's current *Starman* series. Also: a poster of alternative Icelandic performer, Björk, is on a wall that McCoy passes. The image is from the cover of her album "Debut."

panel 4

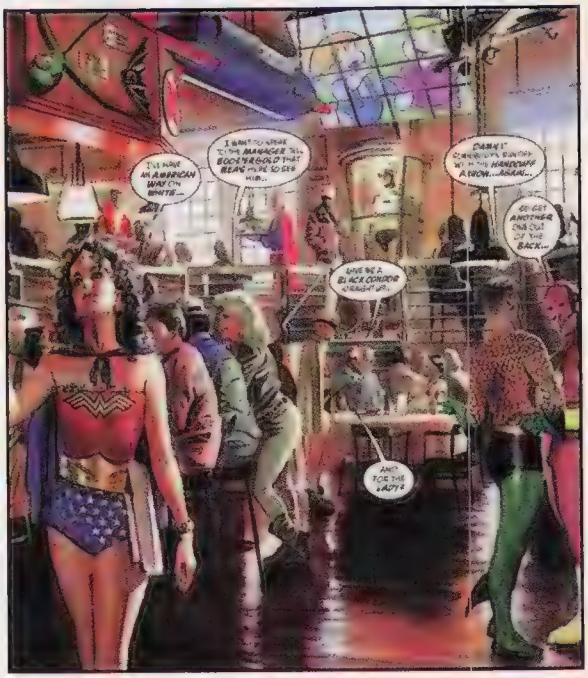
As McCoy continues his walk, he passes a window with several items on display, including three books. These books are *Alternate Egos* by John Law, *Behind the Mask* by Jessie Chambers and *Under the Hood* by Hollis Mason. *Under the Hood* was an autobiography of the original Nite Owl, taken from the *Watchmen* mini-series. The other two are curiously inaccurate (well, as inaccurate as you can get in an "Elseworlds" mini-series like *Kingdom Come*). *Behind the Mask* was actually written by Jonathan Law (a.k.a. the All-Star Squadron's Tarantula) as seen in the *Golden Age* mini-series, while *Alternate Egos* is actually *Altered Egos*, taken from *All-Star Squadron*.

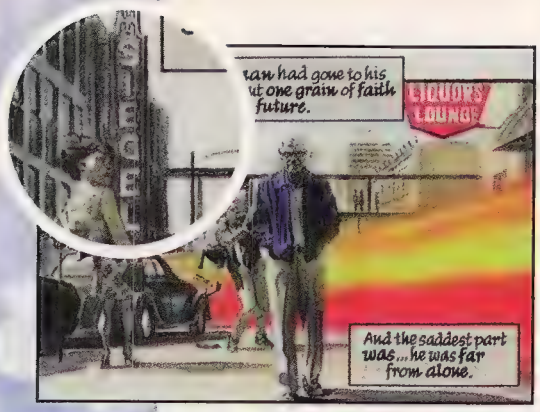
Page 10 (at right)

McCoy decides to patronize his local Planet Krypton restaurant. Of course, this is in reference to Superman's home planet. It also pokes fun of the restaurant chain of Planet Hollywood—and just like Planet Hollywood glamorizes the movie-making industry, Planet Krypton cheapens the image of superheroes. Above the entrance to Planet Krypton is Hanna-Barbera-esque cartoon images of Batman, Green Lantern, Plastic Man, Wonder Woman, Flash, Lobo and Marvin of "Super Friends" fame.

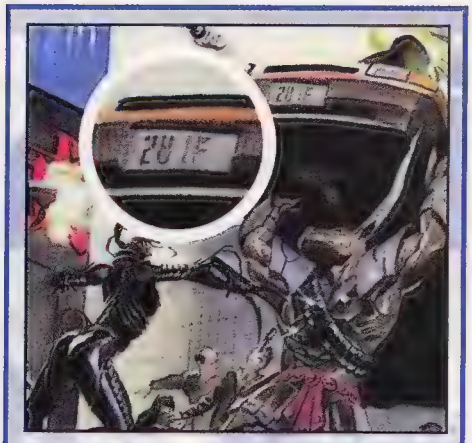
Page 11 (far right)

Inside Planet Krypton are superhero memorabilia and employees dressed like superheroes. Among the memorabilia is Green Arrow's bow and boxing glove arrows, Batman's batarang, replicas of the Golden Age Batplane and the ship that brought the infant Kal-El to earth. On the big screen is DC kiddie characters, Sugar and Spike. On display is the Batman costume from the 1960s "Batman" TV series, just as it is on display at Planet Hollywood in Chicago. At the front counter is an aging Beatriz DaCosta, a.k.a. Fire, asking to see fellow ex-JLAer and manager of Planet Krypton, Booster Gold.

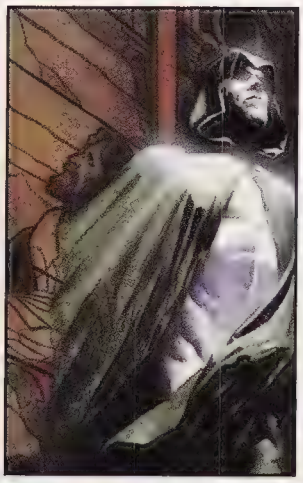




Page 12, panel 2 (left) A sign on the side of a building has the name Siegel, in reference to the late Superman co-creator Jerry Siegel. (The series was also dedicated to Siegel, along with his Superman co-conspirator Joe Shuster.)



Page 16 (above) Manotaur is hoisting a car with the license plate number 28IF. This is the license plate number to the car behind the Beatles on the cover to their "Abbey Road" album.

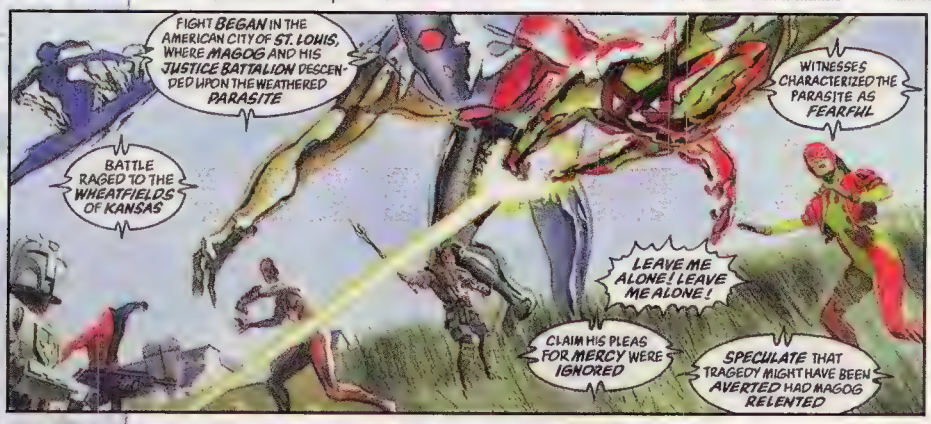


Pages 20-21 (at left)
The naked and aloof Spectre is "...out of touch with the man he once was," Waid says. He says the Spectre needs McCay to witness the upcoming apocalypse and The Spectre is there to pass judgment, not to stop the destruction. "The Spectre is very much God's terrible swift sword." One can see this aspect in his eyes: If you look closely, you will see a tiny skull. (You'll see that skull often in Spec's eyes if you look close enough.)

The stained glass window the Spectre walks through depicts the Agony in the Garden, where Jesus said, "Not my will, but your will be done." This ties into the series tagline: "Whose will be done?" Ironically, Ross says this was coincidental, since his model was a window in his dad's church which just happened to be visually interesting.

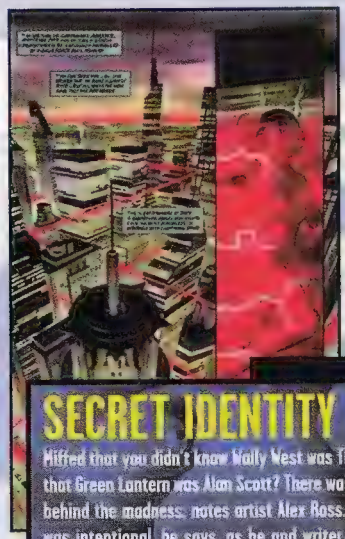
Page 24 As Kal-El lifts a tractor, in the background amongst other animals is a cat, a horse, a dog and a grinning monkey. All are tributes to the Legion of Super-Pets, which were respectively Streaky the Supercat, Comet the Superhorse, Krypto the Superdog and Beppo the Supermonkey.

Page 29, panel 1 (below) Magog and his Justice Battalion take on a weakened and frightened Parasite. Besides Magog and the amalgamated Metal Men in the guise of Alloy, the Battalion includes (counterclockwise from left): Nightshade, Peacemaker, Peter Cannon (Thunderbolt), Judomaster II and Captain Atom, all former Charlton Comics heroes. Ross admits that this is a kind of "tribute to Charlton."



Page 29, panel 2 (above) Magog is shown up close. "We designed him to represent everything we dislike about modern anti-heroes—all those kill-first, talk-later types," Ross says in the card set. "But he wound up looking so cool and possessing such depth that we ended up liking him anyway." Note that Magog's appearance is similar to Marvel's Cable: white hair, metallic arm and opaque, scarred eye.

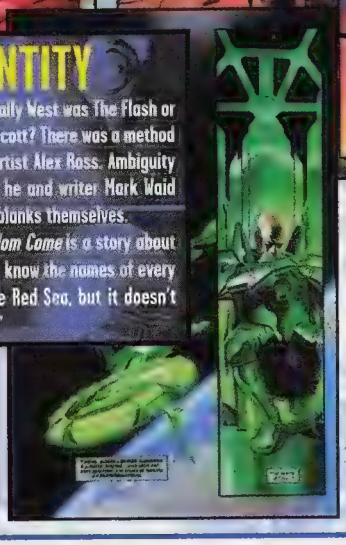
According to Waid, the name "Magog" comes from the Bible's Book of Revelations, where Magog and Gog are emissaries of Satan on Earth. Asks Ross, slyly, "But is there a character named Gog...?"



SECRET IDENTITY

Miffed that you didn't know Wally West was The Flash or that Green Lantern was Alan Scott? There was a method behind the madness, notes artist Alex Ross. Ambiguity was intentional, he says, as he and writer Mark Waid wanted readers to fill in the blanks themselves.

Waid is more blunt: "*Kingdom Come* is a story about generals, not infantry. I don't know the names of every person Moses led across the Red Sea, but it doesn't mean I don't enjoy his story."



Page 33 (far left)

Keystone City is a utopia due in part to the Flash. The Flash is Wally West, but Ross has melded key elements of all three Flashes into this one. The winged helmet is taken from the Golden Age Flash, while the red "aura" is taken from the Silver Age Flash. This Flash also incorporates the energy pulsating around his body like the current Flash. Waid says this Flash has become even more connected to the Speed Force (the energy field from which Flash derives his super-speed) and he is constantly moving to rid his city of crime at all times. It's no wonder that Ross coined him as Mercury, the Roman god of speed, in his original sketch of the Flash.

Page 34 (left)

The new Hawkman is a nod to the Golden Age Hawkman. Essentially, he is the spirit of the Golden Age Hawkman in the body of the new Hawkman, which is merged with the mystical hawk nature. Like the original Hawkman (a.k.a. archaeologist Carter Hall), there are several Egyptian motifs about him. (In fact, Ross called him "Hawkgod" in his original character sketch.) However, this Hawkman has forsaken his crimefighting to take on environmental causes. Ross wanted to do a different take on some of these Golden Age characters and felt the best way to be "more dramatically different is by actually going back the furthest you can go with that character." He wanted to be "inspired by what the initial inspiration was."

If you noticed, Hawkman had no lines in *Kingdom Come*. Waid says this was "because he had no mouth."

Page 35 (left)

Alex Ross originally wanted to call the Green Lantern of *Kingdom Come* "The Green Knight," for obvious visual reasons. This GL is neither Kyle Rayner nor Hal Jordan. Ross chose Alan Scott to wear the power ring because he's a real Golden Age buff. "Originally, this was going to be Hal Jordan," Ross says, but because of Hal's "screwy continuity, [we] avoided it for the best." However, he tried to give readers "a sense of Hal Jordan's character in that Green Lantern, so that he was almost an all-encompassing Green Lantern."

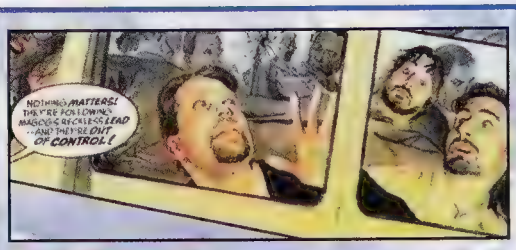
Green Lantern's orbiting emerald satellite is called New Oa in reference to the home planet of the Guardians, the source of all Green Lantern power rings. Also: the saucer part of New Oa is modeled after the ship used on many album covers by Electric Light Orchestra. (This particular view came off the ELO album "Out of the Blue.")

Another interesting aspect of this GL is the fact that his power battery is part of his armor.

Page 37-39 (above and right)

Hey, hey, hey!—those teens ain't no ordinary criminals! That's Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids going on a crime spree in the fair city of Gotham. (Y'know, those kids should know better.)

Fat Albert and his posse are cornered by the Bat-Knights. In the first panel of page 39, a young and frightened Bill Cosby gets busted. These robot sentinels of Gotham are controlled by Bruce Wayne. The Bat-Knights resemble the Golden Age Batmobile if they had Transformer capabilities.



Page 42, panel 2 (above)

Within the cable car are tons of DC Comics staffers.

panel 3 (left)

Ross says Joker's Daughter is modeled after Vertigo artist Jill Thompson (right).

Page 45 (above)

The text in the captions and word balloons are throw-backs to the opening credits of the 1950s "Adventures of Superman" TV show.

Page 46 (at left)

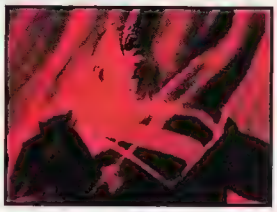
Superman returns. "This is one of my favorite moments in the series," Waid says in the card set. "And it was also the moment I realized it was truly a Superman story."

Superman's costume has been altered in homage to the Max Fleisher cartoons of the 1940s. Not only has the yellow in the "S" symbol has changed to black (as has his belt), but the "S" itself is more angular and rigid. Also, there no longer a yellow "S" on his cape, as will be seen later. Even the blue and red in his costume have been dulled and darkened. All of this was done intentionally by Ross to emphasize Superman's more gritty, darker attitude and look to match the storyline.

This full-page panel represents Superman's detachment from his humanity, since he is, in essence, "looking down" upon those he just saved.

Page 47, panel 1 (at right)

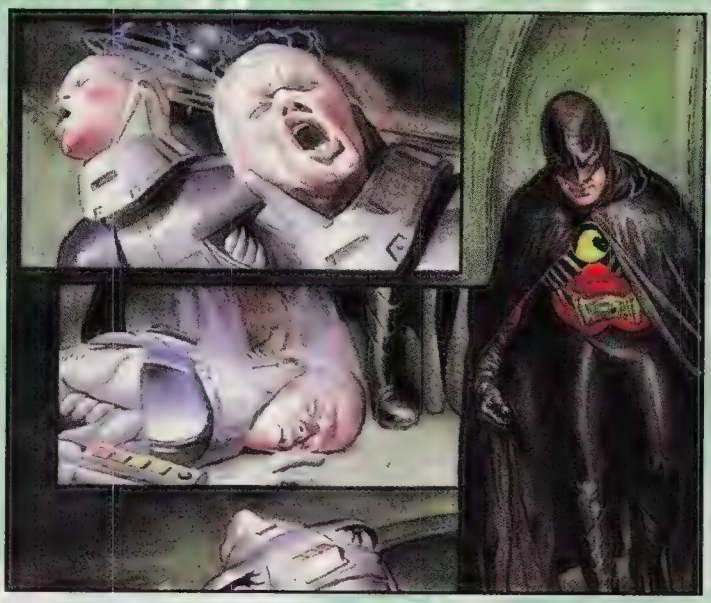
As Norman McCay looks up at the second coming of Superman, he is surrounded by DC staffers and Björk, who makes another appearance in the crowd.



panel 2 (far right)

Another vision comes to McCay. While the crowd cheers Superman's return, McCay sees it as a sure sign that the apocalypse will be coming. Waid says he was impressed with the amount of things people caught in the series, but was also surprised that a number of fans didn't understand that the coming of Superman was not a good thing—but a harbinger of the oncoming apocalypse.

KINGDOM COME #2



Page 9 (at left)

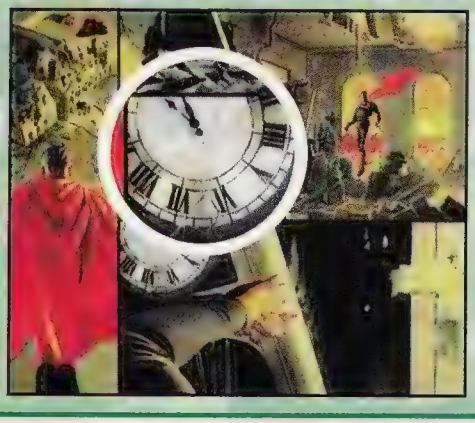
Rendering the mental-powered Brain Trust unconscious is Red Robin (a.k.a. Dick Grayson). Red Robin's costume is an amalgamation of Batman's costume from the recent films and his original Robin costume. Grayson had retired after the death of Starfire, but returned at the behest of Superman. (You later learn that Supes had hoped to use Red Robin's support as a bargaining chip to get Batman to join his Justice League.)

Page 11 (below)

The Justice League, having defeated the Pseudopatriots, heads to the United Nations to make an announcement. Once again, the UN building has taken the form of the Hall of Justice from the "Super Friends" cartoon.

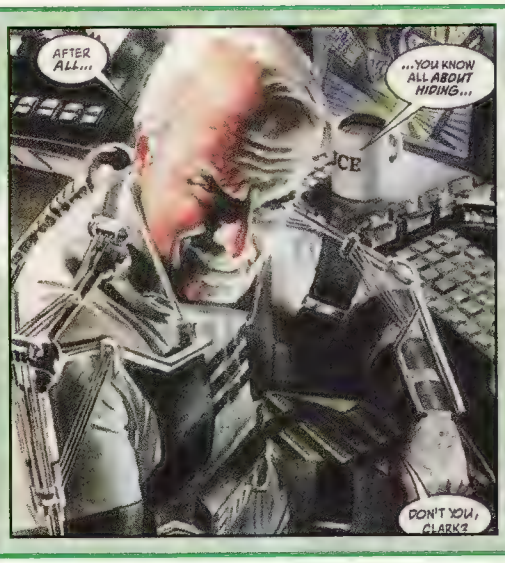
Page 13, panel 1 (above)

Horning his way through the media circus is Phil Sheldon, the protagonist from Kurt Busiek and Ross' popular *Marvels* miniseries from 1993.



Page 15, panel 3 (at right)

Note that the hands on Wayne Manor's grandfather clock are minutes before "the eleventh hour," alluding to the anticipated final confrontation in issue #4.

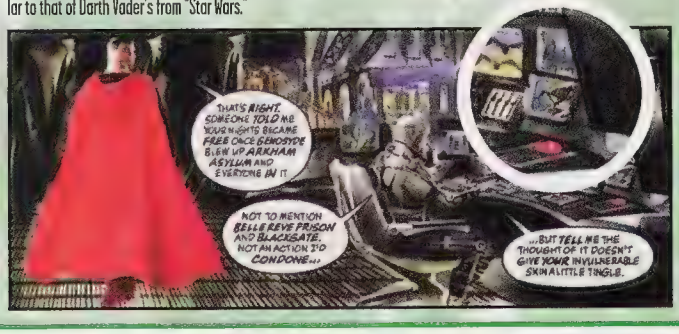


Page 16, panel 1 (left) This is the reader's first glimpse of Bruce Wayne, wearing a sort of exoskeleton which came as the result of a rigorous lifestyle fighting crime. "As Alex and I envisioned it, even though this guy had one of the most perfect bodies on Earth, he put it through so much abuse over the years that it just broke down and shattered."

Fans might take note that Wayne's chest plate is similar to that of Darth Vader's from "Star Wars."

"Batman's job, we decided," Waid says in the card set, "would be to keep the supervillains away from Superman—and vice versa. They are his problem and his alone."

Panel 3 (below) In the lower right screen on Batman's console is the face of Bat-Mite, the imp that bedeviled the Dark Knight during his sillier 1950s comics.



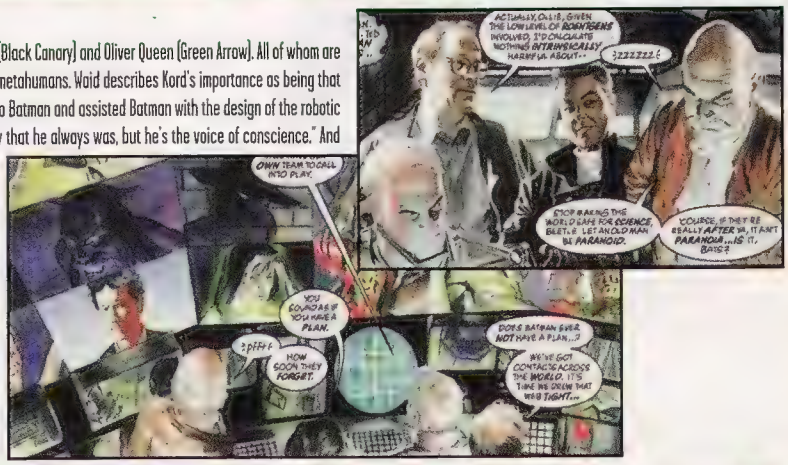
Page 19, panel 2 (at right)

Batman's allies are former JLAers Ted Kord (Blue Beetle), Dinah Queen (Black Canary) and Oliver Queen (Green Arrow). All of whom are non-powered and share Batman's concern about the proliferation of metahumans. Waid describes Kord's importance as being that he is "a tinkerer" and "a complete nerd" but lends technical support to Batman and assisted Batman with the design of the robotic Bat-Knight. Of Queen, Waid states, "He's the bitter, cranky reactionary that he always was, but he's the voice of conscience." And finally, Dinah Queen is there "to put up with Oliver Queen," he laughs.

Panel 4

Batman also has a team of metahumans he uses for his crimefighting activities, as seen on the TV screens. Most of these characters are the offspring of many of the old guard heroes. Waid makes an interesting observation: "The original Teen Titans hang with Superman, while the kids of the Titans are with Batman. It's a 'generational' thing."

Adds Ross, "It was more natural for the kids to be rebellious. To teenagers, it's much cooler to hang with Batman than Superman. Batman's philosophy of acting freely was much more attractive to the younger generation."



Page 20, panel 2 (above)

Ross pays tribute to several comic covers of the Golden Age. Batman is seen swinging from rooftops with a criminal locked under one arm as depicted in *Detective Comics* #27. Superman is shown hoisting a car as seen on the cover of *Action Comics* #1. A horse-riding Wonder Woman is Ross' version of *Wonder Woman* #1.

Page 21, panel 2

The Justice League is shown fighting those who would become members. This included the previously mentioned Phoebus, Starman VII, Brainiac's Daughter (at one point known as XTC—listed on a poster in *XC* #1, page 12—in tribute to the band of the same name, who recorded songs called "That's Really Super, Supergirl" and "Brainiac's Daughter") and Red Tornado III. Starman VII is actually former Legion of Super-Heroes member Starboy transplanted to the past. Brainiac's Daughter is not only the daughter of Brainiac, but also the offspring of Supergirl. (Interestingly, in old DC continuity, Brainiac *5* and Supergirl had a thing for each other). The human Red Tornado III is said to be the successor to Red Tornado II, who now simply goes by the name Tornado.

Page 25 (at left)
The Spectre and McCoy observe as Lex Luthor calls to order a meeting of the Mankind Liberation Front. Besides Luthor, it includes the immortal Vandal Savage, the King of Spades of the Royal Flush Gang, Lord Naga (a.k.a. Kobra), Ibn al Xu'ffasch (heir to Ra's Al Ghul's empire), Selina Kyle (the former Catwoman) and Edward Nigma (the Riddler).

Ross says Ibn al Xu'ffasch is Batman's son from his union with Talia, the daughter of Ra's al Ghul. "Ibn al Xu'ffasch" actually means "son of the bat" in Arabic. (Longtime readers will recall the birth happening in the *Batman: Son of the Demon* graphic novel. The child has yet to resurface in current continuity.)

THE NIGHTCLUB SCENE IS FULL OF CAMEOS FROM THE DC UNIVERSE AND BEYOND.

Page 28 (at left), panel 1 An older and overweight Lobo has a drink with "teammate" Vril Dox II from L.E.G.I.O.N. (he is drinking DC beer). Also, seen are Ultra the Multi-Alien, the motorcycle guy from the Village People, two members of the Blackhawks, Solomon Grundy as a bouncer, Shadow Lass in a costume originally worn by the X-Men's Storm. Flying above the crowd is Ross' creation, Demon Damsel.

Panels 2-3 At the far left (inset) is Brother Power who is getting his finger broken by *Watchmen*'s Rorschach. The joke here, according to Ross, is that "Brother Power doesn't have any bones to break."

Rock star Steve Miller, in the same cheap Halloween mask that he wears on the cover of his album "The Joker," falls for the Human Bomb's "pull my finger joke" (the Human Bomb is drinking Q beer, in reference to Quality Comics, his original comic company). Behind them, again is Ultra the Multi-Alien and Zan of "Super Friends" as a waiter.

The Spectre and McCoy continue to witness the events of that lead them to the apocalypse. On the right of the panel is another of Ross' creation Pinwheel, an old and balding Creeper and a fully skeletal Deadman.

Page 29 (below), panel 1 Many are shocked at Superman's party-crashing. Characters of note include (left to right): the female Blackhawk, a shape-shifting Durlan (like Chameleon of the Legion of Super-Heroes), John Steed and Emma Peel from the TV show "The Avengers," and Mr. Scarlet, a Golden Age Fawcett comics hero who Ross describes as a "working class hero" and a "pre-Savage Dragon."

Page 29 (at right), panel 2 The bartenders are the Weather Wizard and Captain Cold. Ross points out that behind him is a picture of the two old villains with Captain Boomerang. All three were among the Silver Age Flash's Rogues Gallery. To the right of that photo is an autographed photo of the Flash. Ross has mentioned the three villains are the proprietors of the bar. And while the Weather Wizard and Captain Cold run the bar, Captain Boomerang is more of an old favored patron.

Page 30, panel 1 (below)
At the table is the Grim Ghost, a Golden Age hero, and an old and drunken Marvin from "Super Friends" mouthing off to the Man of Steel (Marvin's had a few too many HB beers, in reference to Hanna-Barbera). Behind them are the members of the Village People looking like they've been bionically enhanced since their last tour. On the right is Virman Vundabar all the way from Apokolips, Atom-Smasher, DeSaad and Germ-Man.

Page 31 (below), panel 2 From left: Cesar the Somnambulist from the German film, "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," a Betty Page-like Phantom Lady II, Pinwheel, the silhouette is Ross' creation Nowhere Man.
Panel 3 In the background: Swamp Thing (sitting with trenchcoat), Sherlock Holmes, the Shadow, the Question, Rorschach, Obsidian.

Page 34 Superman and Wonder Woman stand over the unconscious bodies of several German nationalist metahumans. The most powerful of which is Von Bach, (Ross' favorite of the characters he created for the series) who brings to mind the motifs of a heavy industrial German band by the name of Laibach. On Von Bach's right arm is "liebe," the German word for love, and on his left arm is "hass," German for hate.

Page 35 Reminiscent of King Arthur of the British legends, Ross gives Aquaman (also a "King Arthur," if you think about it) a regal look from centuries past, complete with throne and armor. Also, Waid says he came up with this royal Aquaman over three years ago, and paired him with Dolphin not knowing that writer Peter David was planning the same thing when he started with the current *Aquaman* series.

Page 37, panel 4
"There has clearly been a previous intimacy between Wonder Woman and Superman," Waid says in the card set. "But Superman's self-imposed exile took him away from even his closest friends."

Page 40, panel 1
At a newsstand are titles of many pulp magazines that were around in the '30s and '40s. With the exception of *Newstime* (which is a DC Universe magazine), of all the magazine titles, only one is still being published: *Juggs*.

KINGDOM COME #3

Page 5 (at left) Ross' design of Superman's Gulag is based on the Hall of Doom belonging to none other than the Legion of Doom in the "Challenge of the Super Friends" Saturday morning cartoon.

Page 6-7 (below) The metaprisoners find themselves in very comfortable surroundings—however, a gilded cage is a cage nonetheless. Some of the prisoners we see include Ross' creations *KC* versions of Black Manta, Demon Damsel, Stealth II and many unknown metas. In the lower right-hand side, behind the robot guard stands Raggedy Andy leaning against one of the columns.

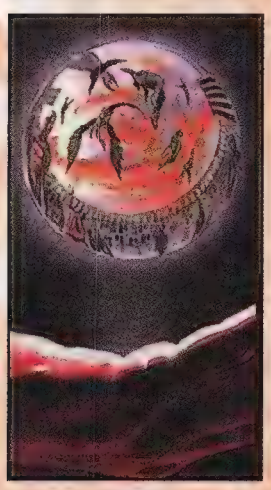
Page 8, panel 1
Among the prisoners in this frame is The Fool and Goblin Lord (modeled after Columbia and Riff-Raff *a la* Nosferatu from "The Rocky Horror Picture Show"), Big Barda (though she's a guard, not a prisoner), Blue (of Red, White and Blue), Spade, Somnambulist and Bloodlust.

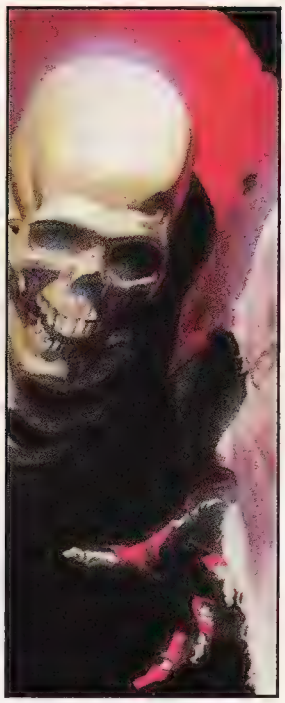
Page 10, panel 5 (at left)
After Von Bach is sent flying by Captain Comet, he is helped out by Kabuki Kommando on his left, and on his right is tie-dyed hero Terry LaBan. LaBan is the writer/artist of *Cud* which is printed on his T-shirt.

Von Bach says to Comet in German, "No threat, astronaut." Kabuki Kommando says in Japanese, "He's heavier than he looks."

Page 11, panel 1
Von Bach, threatening, "I will kill that guy," pushes Laban down. Kabuki Kommando replies, "Don't get mad at me...get mad at him!"

Page 11, panels 5-7 (below)
Red, an agent of Luthor, shows his boss what is happening at the Gulag via the eye of his captured cohort White.





Pages 12-14 (above and right) McCoy and the Spectre listen in on a cosmic conversation on the fate of Earth. The cosmic bigwigs include Phantom Stranger, Shazam, Ganthet the last Guardian, Highfather of the New Gods and Zeus. McCoy then enters a conversation with Deadman. Deadman's skeletal appearance signifies, according to Ross, Boston Brand's "acceptance of his fate."

Page 21, panel 2 (at left)
In a war room, designed intentionally by Ross to look like the one seen in "Dr. Strangelove," the Mankind Liberation Front discuss ways of putting the kibosh on Superman.

Page 22, panel 1 It's interesting to note that all the children of the original Teen Titans have switched gender. Robin, Kid Flash, Aqualad and Speedy all had daughters, while Wonder Girl had a son.

Panel 3 If you look closely, there is intimate relationship between Ibn al Xu'ffasch and Nightstar as seen in this panel by the intense gaze they share. (On page 24, panels 4 and 5, they're holding hands.) It's ironic that though Batman and Robin no longer see eye to eye, their children are most interested in each other.

Page 23 (above and right) A psychological wreck, the Martian Manhunter scours telepathically for information concerning Captain Marvel. The Martian Manhunter's mental state is a compromise in *KC*. According to Ross, he wanted to include this important character in the DC Universe. However, his psychological problems prevents a "third Superman" in the final battle, which might have complicated the plot.

Page 25, panel 3 (below)
The former members of the Teen Titans group together once again to discuss the wisdom of throwing a bunch of psychotic metahumans in the same prison. Of course, their former leader Robin leads this conversation.

Note that they are practically fearful of Superman, a further indication of his obvious personality changes. Quite a role reversal for the Man of Steel.

Also, the navigational star chart in the center of the floor is similar to the one used on the TV show "Lost in Space."

Page 27 (above) As McCoy explains his presence to Superman, Hawkman, Power Woman, Flash, Wonder Woman and Atom-Smasher, other heroes look on. On the level above them are Jack Kirby's Atlas, Green Lantern, Bulletman and Bulletgirl and the Marvel Family of King Marvel, Lady Marvel and their son Whiz.

King Marvel is a cross between Captain Marvel Jr. and Elvis Presley. There is a theory that Elvis as a child had read *Captain Marvel Jr.* comics, which could certainly be true since his creation was at the time the King was just an adolescent. Ross believes that Elvis later designed his '60s and '70s jumpsuit with the short cape and big collar after his childhood hero.

Also, on the upper level is the Tornado, formerly the JLA's Red Tornado, his protégé Red Tornado III and the Golden Age comical "Ma Hunkel" Red Tornado. However, this time she seems more robotic than comical.

Page 38 (at left) In panels 1-3 (and on the following page, panel 3), standing behind Red Robin are Mike Nesmith, Mickey Dolenz, Davey Jones and Peter Tork—collectively known as the '60s rock group The Monkees. They are shown in their Monkeemen costumes similar to those once worn on their TV show. Snapper Carr, former hip mascot to the JLA, appears in panel 2. (they continue to appear in the battle at the Gulag in issue #4. Tragically, none of the Monkeeman survive the battle.)

Page 39, panel 4 (below) There are robotic versions of the Beatles in their "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" uniforms standing above Superman and Wonder Woman as they kiss. On the right is a female Martian Manhunter. (J'onn J'onzz had a daughter at one time and Ross says that while his daughter is no longer around, this female Martian Manhunter is a clone of her.)

Page 41 (above) Note that despite Batman's reluctance to help, he is catching up with the Gulag's blueprints, as seen on his monitor. Pretty sneaky, that Batguy is, eh?

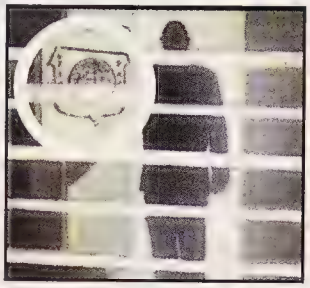
Page 46, panel 1 (at right) Besides the DC heroes and the Monkeemen, one can also spot teeny-tiny renditions of Spider-Man, Thor, Captain America, X-0 Manowar and Dr. Strange in the crowd of heroes rushing to meet the onslaught of the anti-heroes.

KINGDOM COME #4

Page 9, panel 6 (above)
In panel 6, Waid, *KC* editor Dan Raspler (at right) and his assistant Peter Tomasi (in between) are depicted as members of the United Nations.

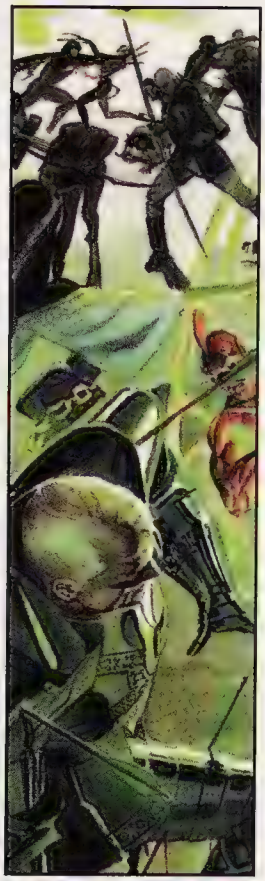
Page 10 (below and right) On the door of Secretary Wyrmwood's door is a symbol very similar to the old Justice League of America logo.

Incidentally, Ross designed Wyrmwood after F.B.I. Director Skinner from "The X-Files." His name however also is from the Bible's Revelations. "Wyrmwood is the name of the star that fell to Earth," says Waid, "and clearly, in our story, the star is the bomb."



Page 11, panel 1 (above)
On the right side is a cyborg version of the cowboy Vigilante and below him, lying on the ground is the female Martian Manhunter.

Page 16, panel 1 (at left)
Batman and Wonder Woman begin their battle, both physical and ideological, as foreshadowed in the opening pages of issue #1 (below). Batman confronts her with the fact that she is seeking redemption through violence since losing her status with her sister Amazons. As Waid states, "Batman's job is to expose the truth about people," just as Batman did in his previous conversations with Superman.



Page 19, panel 3 (at right)
This Green Lantern still has the weakness to wood as proven by the fact that the Green Arrow can still get his arrows through GL's armor.

Page 21 (below)
The nuclear bombs resemble the matrix chamber that brought Superman to Earth.

Page 25, panel 3 (at left)
Behind Superman is Menagerie in the form of a green Martian from Edgar Rice Burroughs' novels starring John Carter of Mars.

Page 29, panel 5
Just before the bomb goes off, the New God harbinger of death, the Black Racer, appears behind the Blue Beetle.

Panel 6
Alex Ross assures us that Avia, Scott Free and Big Barda "Boom Tubed" it out of the destruction.

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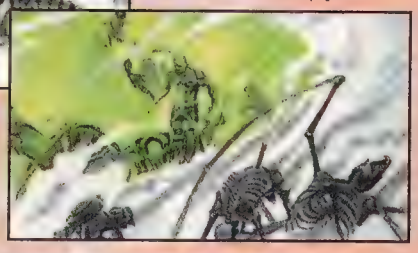
Page 30 (below) By calling on lightning, Captain Marvel detonates the nuclear bomb high above the battlefield, but not high enough. The mushroom cloud is in the shape of a cross symbolizing God's wrath.

Page 32 (at left) Superman, in the midst of the destruction, is surrounded by the remains of the dead. Among the known dead are the Blue Beetle, Creeper, Stealth II, Wildcat III, King Krimson, Golden Guardian, Robotman III, Aleea Strange, 666, Catwoman II, Phoebus, Atom-Smasher, Sandman III, Alloy, Nuculoid, Green Arrow (to the left of Robotman III, in the same position he was in right before the bomb hit), Red Arrow and both Black Canaries (II and III).

Page 33, panel 5 (at right) We also see Hawkman dead, but alive we see Fate, Magog, Ray, Green Lantern, Jade, Trix and the Flash. (Thunder is also seen on the next page. Batman, Wonder Woman, Tokyo Rose, Manotaur and Joker's Daughter are also seen a few pages later.)



Page 35 (at left) An angry Superman is about to tear down the UN, in a series of mistakes that could have made this even a bigger tragedy. "Superman wrote his own part," Waid says. "I didn't know (why he did what he did) until the very end of issue four when he was about to tear everything down. Superman made all the wrong decisions in the story. I must have screwed up as a writer. No matter what I did Superman makes the wrong choices. Then I realized Superman made the wrong choices because he abandoned his humanity. Once I realized that, things were crystal clear."

Pages 37-39 (at right) Superman's anger is abated thanks to Norman McCay. Redemption has been achieved by Superman forgiving himself of things he had no control over. "Redemption is clearly the driving force of this whole series," says Mark Waid.

Page 43, panel 1 (at far right)
Now held on Paradise Island, Manotaur, Tokyo Rose, Magog, Joker's daughter, Swastika, Thunder and Trix are the last few inmates to survive the destruction of the Gulag. Of all the new breed of heroes, these few can gain redemption—rather than dying like Von Bach and his ilk.

Panel 4 (at right)
Once again, the old JLA logo is seen incorporated into the UN symbol. We also see Alan Scott representing New Oa as a human and not a superhuman.

Page 44 (above) Superman buries the dead in the Kansas wasteland. To keep him company is Krypto.

It's ironic that, like Magog in issue #2, Superman is trying to "fix" Kansas, further drawing parallels between the two heroes. He is now back where he started—Kansas, on a real farm as opposed to his Fortress of Solitude—bringing his story full circle by linking him with his human roots once again.

Page 47, panel 4 (above) McCay's faith is renewed at the story's conclusion. And he's not the only one. In the front pew at McCay's church sits Jim Corrigan, a.k.a. the Spectre. In a tribute to the creators of Superman, in the second pew are Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster.

THE SEQUEL

WITH *KINGDOM COME*'S PROVEN SUCCESS, can there be a sequel far behind? Sort of, the creators say. "We swore we wouldn't do a sequel," Waid says. "But we have stumbled on an idea that would be terrific." The idea? A *Kingdom Come* "prequel" titled *Kingdom*, an ongoing series to premiere next summer involving both Waid and Ross. Waid says he's set to write it while Ross will consult and is slated to contribute covers.

Set in DC continuity, says Waid, "It will follow Superman, Batman and current DC players, but the focus will be on the birth and rise of Magog and the other heroes who have appeared in *Kingdom Come*. We saw how they ended up, now we'll see how they begin." W

Craig Kostelecky's head is still spinning from researching this article. So is the Wizard *staff's.*

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ALL ACCESS

A SNEAK PEEK AT THE STORYLINES OF 1997's BIGGEST BOOKS

By Matthew Brady

It's getting colder outside. Frost hugs the ground in the mornings. There's a fire in the fireplace and warm wishes from everyone you know. That can only mean one thing...it's time for the mighty *Wizard* 1997 Reading Guide!

Yeah, winter is cool, but hey, let's face it, what we all really want to know about is what's coming up in our favorite comics, right? Right. So, to please you, we've again tracked down all the creators of the hottest books we could find and made them (threatened them with our old socks, we did) tell us what's coming up for 1997. Don't read any of these books? No problemo! Check out the "What You Should Know" section for each title, and you'll be as up-to-date as the rest of us. Okay? Okay.

Below lie some of the biggest secrets about upcoming comics ever shared by their creators. Tempted to read yet? Go, fanboy, go! Quit yer droolin' and start your readin'!

X-MEN

Publisher: Marvel Comics

Creative Teams: Scott Lobdell, Joe Madureira & Tim Townsend (*Uncanny X-Men*); Scott Lobdell, Carlos Pacheco & Bob Wiacek (*X-Men*)

What You Should Know: Still reeling from their battle with Onslaught (an entity comprised of both Professor X and Magneto's personalities), the X-Men have pulled themselves together, both physically and emotionally. Thanks to Onslaught's rampage and apparent slaughter of the Fantastic Four and Avengers, public opinion turned drastically against mutants, and this was only made worse by the Election Day eve assassination of the anti-mutant presidential candidate, Graydon Creed. On top of this, Cyclops' brother, Havok, has apparently gone rogue and is operating under his own set of laws, Joseph (the former Magneto) and Gambit are constantly at each other's throats, and Gladiator, the leader of the Shi'ar Imperial Guard, showed up on the team's doorstep and sucker-punched Cannonball.

What's Gonna Happen: In *Uncanny X-Men*, to everyone's surprise (mostly Cannonball's), Cannonball wails on Gladiator, one of the toughest fighters in the galaxy, and defeats him. It's then revealed that the Shi'ar are in dire straits due to an invading alien force whose intent is to wipe out the entire Shi'ar empire. Five X-Men hit the spaceways to try and stop the takeover: Rogue, Gambit, Bishop, Beast and Joseph (they've *gotta* find a codename for this guy). In the three-part story, Bishop and the Shi'ar Deathbird find themselves attracted to each other in more ways than one. Also, during the conflict, Gambit will have a hard time dealing with the death he witnesses (Any takers on who it's gonna be?), which will serve to reveal a little more about the mysterious Cajun's past.

In *X-Men*, the first three months of '97 will be spent viewing the X-team from the point of view of an outsider, namely Shang-Chi, Master of Kung-Fu. He's come to America to enlist the aid of the remaining X-Men in defeating an Asian crimelord intent on taking over the remains of the late Fu Manchu's criminal empire. How does this involve the X-Men? Well, it seems this crimelord wants to build an empire big enough to go against the Asian branch of the Hellfire Club's Inner Circle. Needless to say, if the Hellfire Club's Inner Circle is involved, the X-Men want to know about it.

And after that? Can anyone say "The Trial of Xavier"? Marvel ain't revealing much, except that it'll be a mini-series next year following up on Professor X's involvement in "Onslaught." But you can rest assured it'll throw the X-world for a loop.

The Inside Scoop: While elements from the various X-books seem to be leading towards the classic Chris Claremont/John Byrne "Days of Future Past" storyline, Lobdell warns fans not to bet the farm on things ending up just like the dystopian view of the X-future where Sentinels rule the world. In Lobdell's mind, a predetermined future robs the characters of choices, and if the X-Men are about anything, their stories speak volumes about people taking control of their lives.

SPIDER-MAN

Publisher: Marvel Comics

Creative Teams: Tom DeFalco, Steve Skroce & Bud LaRosa (*Amazing Spider-Man*); J.M. DeMatteis, Luke Ross & John Stanisci (*Spectacular Spider-Man*); Todd DeZago, Mike Wieringo & Richard Case (*Sensational Spider-Man*); Howard Mackie, John Romita Jr. & Scott Hanna (*Peter Parker: Spider-Man*)

What You Should Know: Finally, the one, true Spider-Man (a.k.a. Peter Parker) returned, wearing the old red-and-blue suit in the wake of the "Revelations" storyline. Wah-hoo! Following the story's devastation, Peter and Mary Jane have tried to get back to their lives as usual, despite the loss of Ben Reilly (Peter's clone, who was like a brother to Petey) and their newborn baby (who was actually switched at birth with a stillborn baby by one of the Green Goblin's henchpeople). The two now live in the Forest Hills house of Peter's late Aunt May, and have started to take classes at Empire State University. Also, following "Revelations," the Spider-books have become self-contained, meaning stories will start and end in one title.

What's Gonna Happen: In *Amazing Spider-Man*, a new Black Tarantula will show up, not connected in any way to the old Spidey villain with those dorky pointed boots. The Black Tarantula will plague Spidey until issue #425, the double-sized climax to the storyline. Also in *Amazing*, look for a redesigned Electro, who gets going again when he's just about to be electrocuted for one of his crimes, plus the original Doctor Octopus will be rearing his chubby little face as well.

In *Spectacular Spider-Man*, Spidey will face his first villain, the Chameleon, in a two-part story that will delve into the psyche of the Man-

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

Publisher: Marvel Comics

Creative Team: Peter David, Adam Kubert & Tom Wegrzyn

What You Should Know: Following the events of "Onslaught," and the loss of Bruce Banner from his psyche, the Hulk found himself left as the biggest kid on the block in the Marvel Universe, and in a position to kick some serious ass. You see, this post-"Onslaught" Hulk, having lost the reason and humanity of Banner, is mean. Even meaner than any of his earlier incarnations. Unfortunately for his wife, Betty, this Hulk no longer recognizes her in any way. Joining the grumpy Hulk on his latest adventures is Janis, a descendant of Rick Jones from the future of the *Hulk: Future Imperfect* mini-series, where the Hulk rules the world.

This new version of the Hulk, instead of just saying, "Leave Hulk alone!" actually does something about it, and lately took over one of the Florida Keys, declaring it as his own country. Figuring the military would just nuke the whole island to get rid of him, the Hulk kept the residents of the island as his reluctant hostage-citizens. However, the Hulk learned quickly that ruling your own country in the Florida Keys turns out not to be all it's cracked up to be (he should've

with-No-Face, and try to find out what makes him tick. Following the Chameleon's return, the Jack O'Lantern will come back to town, trying to regain his rep as a major player in the supervillain scene. Plans call for *Spectacular* to focus on the Jameson family as well, including J. Jonah Jameson, his wife Marla and his son, astronaut John Jameson.

Meanwhile, over in *Sensational Spider-Man*, the new year kicks off with the conclusion of a three-part Savage Land storyline that has guest appearances by the Hulk, Ka-Zar, Shanna, Zabu and a whole bunch of S.H.I.E.L.D. goons. Look for *Sensational* to be the Spidey-book that focuses on second-rate villains (like Stilt-Man and the Looter) and the pitfalls that they unfortunately run into. Also, the original Vulture will be making his triumphant return in the pages of *Sensational*.

Finally, over in *Peter Parker: Spider-Man*, the year will start off with the offbeat "Mary Jane's Story," where MJ takes charge during a hostage crisis at ESU. It's a glimpse into how MJ sees Spider-Man, and will allow her to empathize with Peter more in the future. Further along in '97, Peter Parker will delve into the world of organized crime in New York, and will explore how S.H.I.E.L.D.'s old nemesis, HYDRA, fits into the whole scene. You can look for guest shots from Dr. Strange and Shang-Chi in *Peter Parker* as well.

The Inside Scoop: Spider-Man Group Editor Ralph Macchio promises that all upcoming Spider-Man mini-series, specials and events will serve a purpose. They'll act to answer a question, finish a storyline or solve a mystery. Speaking of specials, Macchio let it slip that he's working to get the classic *Amazing Spider-Man* team of Stan Lee and John Romita Sr. back together on a Spider-Man project in 1997. Stay tuned for more info!

taken Dr. Doom's "How to Dictate a Teeny-Tiny Country" course).

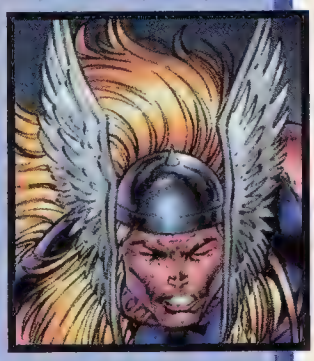
What's Gonna Happen: In issue #452, we'll see that the Hulk's attempt at pulling a Doc Doom in the Keys doesn't work out for a variety of reasons, and old Hulkie takes off to the Savage Land, the one place on Earth where a big green man can be a big green man, and no one really cares. While in the Savage Land, the Hulk will bump into Spider-Man, in a storyline crossing into *Sensational Spider-Man*. He'll also run into his old buddy Wolverine down there as well. While in the Savage Land, the Hulk will realize that he's getting sick due to the residual effects of the Onslaught battle, where he lost the Banner aspect of himself. He'll quickly realize that the stronger he gets (i.e., the madder he gets), the sicker he gets. Realizing that he needs medical help quickly, the Hulk will turn to the one being with expertise in dealing with superbeing genetics: Apocalypse.

Down the Road: While the Hulk looks to Apocalypse for help for his condition, it seems that Apocalypse has other plans. Funny thing about Apocalypse is that he's never found a replacement for Archangel, his former Horseman of Death, and he thinks the Hulk may just fit that bill. Also, as you may have guessed, the Hulk's worsening condition is going to be a major factor in the consolidation of the "Heroes Reborn" universe with the regular Marvel Universe in late '97.

The Inside Scoop: Think you're seeing more Hulk crossovers and guest appearances than before? Well, you are. *Hulk* writer Peter David says that crossovers and guest appearances have always been a major part of the Marvel Universe, and now with the major heroes gone, Spider-Man, the X-Men and the Hulk are the only big-time games in town, so if a crossover is called for, you can bet the Hulk will be showing up!

THE END IS NIGH!

Over in the other part of the Marvel Universe, things will be heating up in 1997, building to a world-threatening climax with the 12th issues of the four "Heroes Reborn" series, all coming out next September.

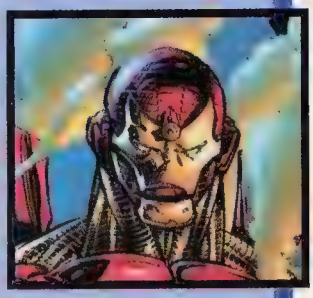


The Avengers—The year kicks off with a confrontation with the Hulk, a battle where Captain America will show what he's made of when the Hulk continuously hammers on his shield for several minutes, ultimately embedding Cap into a wall.

Also, when all the "Heroes Reborn" titles cross over early in the year, Iron Man will join the team. At the big meeting of the teams, the heroes will exchange information about a big galactic threat headed their way.

Captain America—Bucky will find herself in S.H.I.E.L.D. training, while clues will start to be dropped regarding her true relationship with Cap. Falcon will enter S.H.I.E.L.D. training as well, as Nick Fury has laid claim on him since Falc received a lower-grade version of the super-soldier serum.

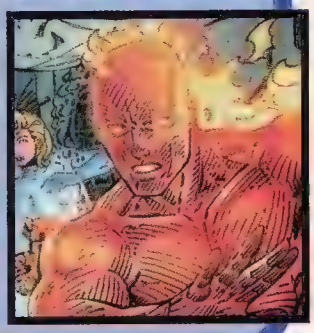
In a crossover that Liefeld arranged as a condition of the original "Heroes Reborn" deal, Cap will meet with Cable, who's been journeying the space and timeways in search of the missing heroes.



Iron Man—Ol' Shell-head will run into HYDRA, Whiplash and the Mandarin as Iron Man slowly comes to terms with his new role as the world's armored avenger. Also, Iron Man may end up bumping into Doc Doom before too long.

Fantastic Four—The FF will meet up with the Inhumans and the Silver Surfer. Unfortunately, the Surfer's appearance heralds the imminent arrival of someone big...name starts with a G...eats planets...ringing any bells yet? No? Galactus, you dummy!

As the heroes become aware of Mr. G's threat, new alliances are forged in what Lee calls the "Atomic Knights of the Round Table," when Doom, Tony Stark, Bruce Banner and Reed Richards have to join together to lead the other heroes of the "Heroes Reborn" universe against Galactus, in a battle which will set the stage for the missing heroes to rejoin the main Marvel Universe. ■ *MB*



Other Cool Stuff from Marvel in 1997: The much-ballyhooed *Thunderbolts* debuts in February. Written by Kurt Busiek and penciled by Mark Bagley, this book tells the tale of a team that hopes to replace the Avengers in the aftermath of "Onslaught."...Also on tap is "Heroes Reunited," a tentative title for tying in the "Heroes Reborn" books with the regular Marvel Universe....A new *Alpha Flight* book is in the works, as is a *Quicksilver* series.

BATMAN

Publisher: DC Comics

Creative Teams: Doug Moench, Kelley Jones & John Beatty (*Batman*); Chuck Dixon, Graham Nolan & David Roach (*Detective Comics*); Alan Grant, Dave Taylor & Stan Woch (*Batman: Shadow of the Bat*)

What You Should Know: Following the "Legacy" crossover, Batman has returned to Gotham City, where business has returned to normal. Unfortunately, normal in Gotham means the classic Batman villains are back, including the Ventriloquist, Riddler, Scarface, Penguin and Man-Bat. Also, new villains have been cropping up with alarming regularity, with names like The Undertaker, The Ogre and plenty of others, as if the old ones weren't enough. But all the crimefighting has only served to strengthen Batman's commitment to his chosen path in life, and nothing will stop his mission.

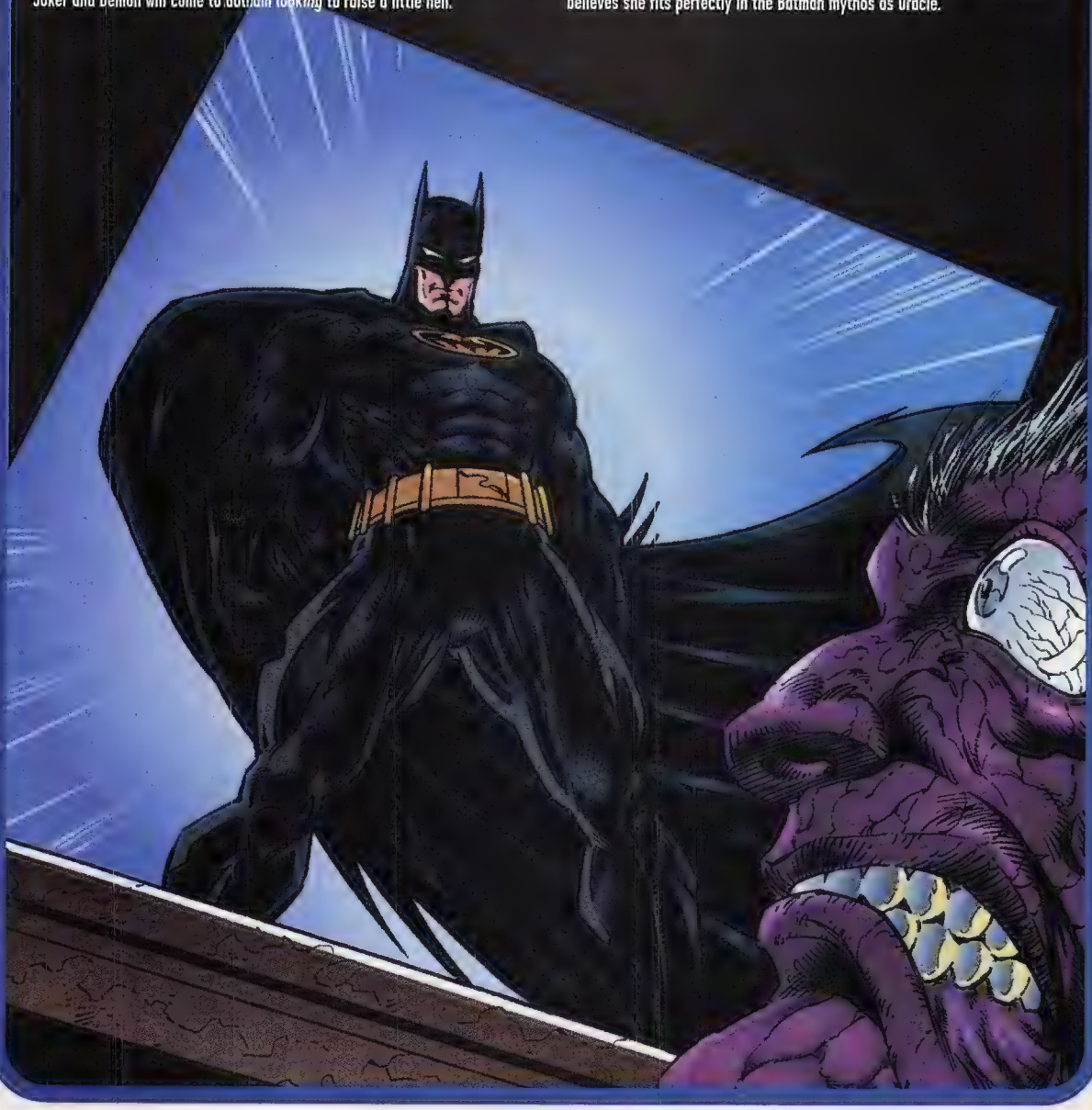
What's Gonna Happen: In *Batman*, the year starts off with part one of a two-part Spectre story. Also, at the same time, Batman will be making an appearance in *The Spectre*. Despite appearances, Batman Group Editor Denny O'Neil insists this isn't a crossover, just a coincidence in timing. Later on in *Batman*, a new villain, Faceless, will debut (man, Bats gets all the weirdest villains), and the Joker and Demon will come to Gotham looking to raise a little hell.

Over in *Detective*, following the conclusion of the Riddler/Cluemaster team-up, Deathstroke and Gunhawk will show up for a three-part story, and in the summer, everyone's favorite poster boy for moisturizer, Killer Croc, will do a two-issue gig.

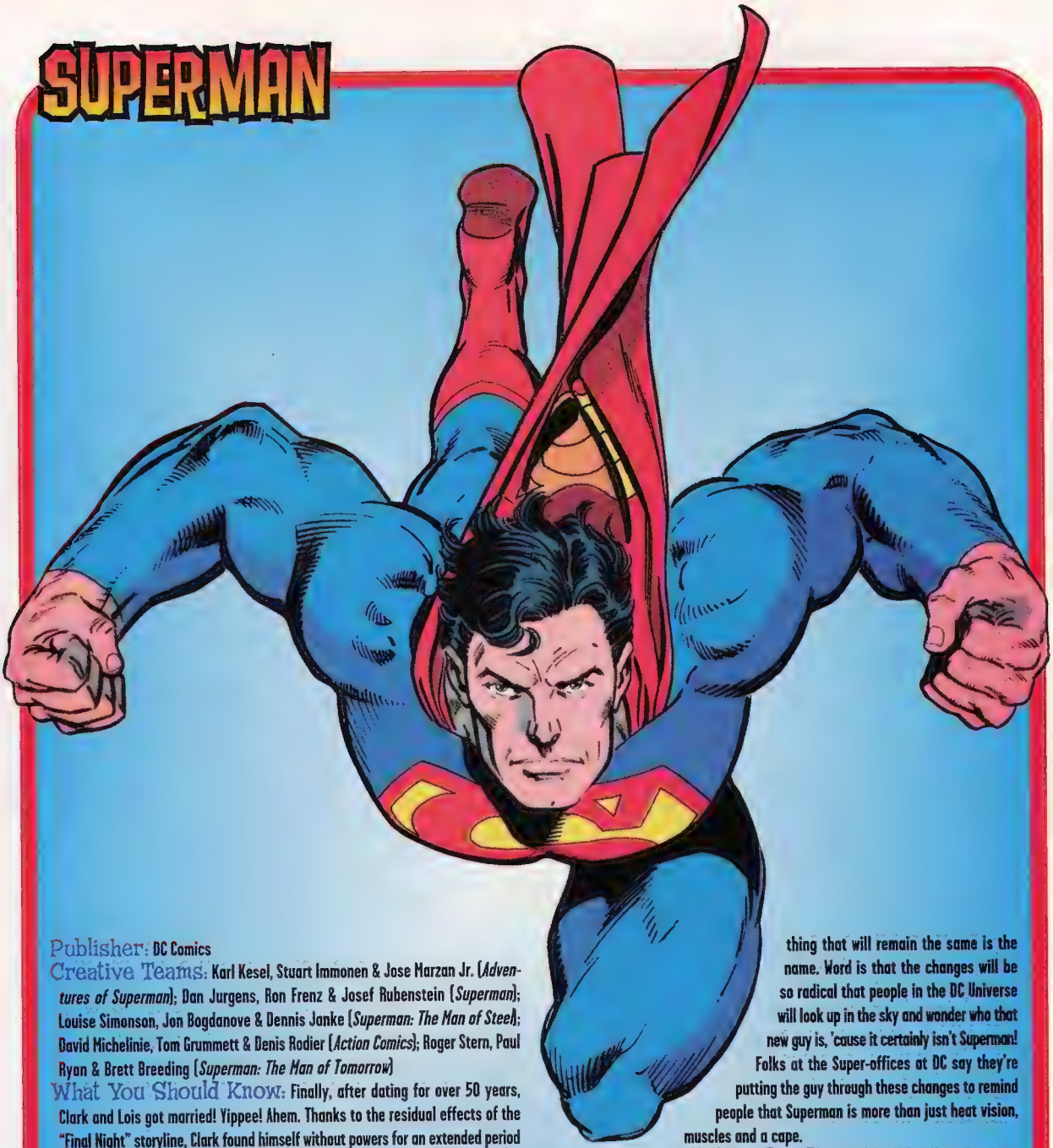
Classic villain time continues in *Shadow of the Bat*, with January's wrap-up of a Scarface/Ventriloquist two-part story, and then a two-part (of course) Two-Face story. Following Two-Face, plans call for a new villain to be introduced in a two-part storyline, and finally Fate will show up in the fall for a two-parter.

Down the Road: Look for the traditional Batman one-shots to be released in the summer, in conjunction with the release of "Batman and Robin." Specials on tap include books starring Poison Ivy, Mr. Freeze, Batgirl and Bane.

The Inside Scoop: Despite all the rumors, neither DC nor Warner Bros. places any constraints or demands on the Batman family of titles when a new Batman movie comes out. The decision to put out specials that feature villains and other characters from the movie is strictly up to the Bat-offices. Also, the Bat-editors are keeping their cards close to their respective chests in regards to a new Batgirl debuting in the Bat-books. Word is that if Batgirl did show up again in Gotham, there's no way it would be Barbara Gordon. Batman Group Editor Denny O'Neil believes she fits perfectly in the Batman mythos as Oracle.



SUPERMAN



Publisher: DC Comics

Creative Teams: Karl Kesel, Stuart Immonen & Jose Marzan Jr. (*Adventures of Superman*); Dan Jurgens, Ron Frenz & Josef Rubenstein (*Superman*); Louise Simonson, Jon Bogdanove & Dennis Janke (*Superman: The Man of Steel*); David Michelinie, Tom Grummett & Denis Rodier (*Action Comics*); Roger Stern, Paul Ryan & Brett Breeding (*Superman: The Man of Tomorrow*)

What You Should Know: Finally, after dating for over 50 years, Clark and Lois got married! Yippee! Ahem. Thanks to the residual effects of the "Final Night" storyline, Clark found himself without powers for an extended period of time (which allowed him to get his haircut for the wedding, by the way). In trying to get his powers re-started, he sought help from Professor Hamilton, the folks at Project Cadmus, the STAR Labs scientists and just about everybody else. Finally, he decided to skip the middleman, and just fly into the sun. (Uh, Supes? Could we have thought about this first?) Add to this the stress of being recently married, serving as the acting editor-in-chief of the *Daily Planet* while Perry White recuperates from cancer treatments, and oh, yeah, this recently organized group of superpowered baddies calling themselves the Superman Revenge Squad who've joined together to whack Supes, and you can see how the Man of Steel just wants to sleep for all of 1997. Instead of a vacation, however, Superman gets (drumroll, please)...

What's Gonna Happen: Ch-ch-ch-changes! Okay, no one is talking details about this yet, but big, BIG plans are in the works for the Man of Steel in 1997. We're not talking just growing a goatee here (don't worry, he's not); these are big-time changes. Powers. Appearance. Attitude. Radically changing. The only thing that will remain the same is the name. Word is that the changes will be so radical that people in the DC Universe will look up in the sky and wonder who that new guy is, 'cause it certainly isn't Superman! Folks at the Super-offices at DC say they're putting the guy through these changes to remind people that Superman is more than just heat vision, muscles and a cape.

Down the Road: Can't say for sure. The storyline bringing the changes is, at this point, open-ended, so it could come to a climax mid-year, or go on through the next year (don't bet on that, though; see below). Cynics about the Lois and Clark wedding who think the marriage is going to break up over the changes won't be able to say "I told you so," because Lois is going to be standing by her man while he goes through this dramatic transformation. It is going to affect their relationship, but Lois knew what she was getting into when she said, "I do." Mr. and Mrs. Kent are in it for the long haul.

The Inside Scoop: Let's see, Superman debuted in *Action Comics* #1 in 1938, and the year after next is 1998. Hmmm...1998 - 1938 = the 60th Anniversary of Superman! Start looking for big announcements in the latter half of 1997 regarding this comic book landmark. With a movie in the works, a postage stamp and tons of anniversary stories being worked on already, 1998 will be the Year of Superman. You've been warned.

GREEN LANTERN

Publisher: DC Comics
Creative Team: Ron Marz, Darryl Banks & Romeo Tanghal
What You Should Know: Finally feeling that his life has some semblance of order, Green Lantern (a.k.a. Kyle Rayner) has recently gotten back together with Donna Troy and has been slowly gaining acceptance as Green Lantern in the superhero community. This respect was compounded during the "Final Night" crossover, during which Kyle was instrumental in getting the aid of Hal Jordan, who ultimately sacrificed his life in order to re-start the sun. As a matter of honor, Kyle held a memorial service for Hal, and created a statue of him for his memorial. Since then, Kyle has become close with others who have worn the emerald ring in the past, including Alan Scott, Guy Gardner and John Stewart. Kyle has also accepted the responsibilities of a commitment with Donna, and devotes much of his time to her and her son.

Unfortunately, villains never take a holiday, despite how well the hero's life is going, and in that respect, he's had to go toe-to-toe with the returned Dr. Light and this cranky chick named Finality (see below).

What's Gonna Happen: 1997 will start off with the conclusion of "Retribution," a three-part story that introduces Finality, the former head of planetary security for a world that was guarded by a Green Lantern. Seems that when Hal Jordan went nutso and took the power away from all the other Green Lanterns so he could hog it for himself, Finality's planet was stomped on by the next alien invasion that came through town. Assuming that this guy calling himself the last Green Lantern is responsible, she busts in, steals his battery, and busts out again, leaving GL with only 24 hours to find her and recharge his ring.

Alan Scott's emerald-skinned daughter Jade will join the supporting cast of *Green Lantern* in issue #86. Jade (a former Infinity Inc. member) will be returning to New York to pursue her modeling career, and may actually stay at Kyle's apartment for a while, something that will strain his relationship with Donna.

Also on deck for early '97 is another crossover with *Green Arrow*, and Donna will face one of her greatest threats to date: meeting Kyle's mom. The two will travel out to L.A. for the meeting, and may head over to Hawaii to meet up with that boy who wears the "S" on his chest.

Down the Road: Rest assured, plans are in the works for *Green Lantern* #100, but it's just a little too far away to talk about them now. For the most part, Kyle will have dealt with Hal's death by 1997, and will pretty much be over any grief he might have felt. One thing of note, however: The lasting effect of Hal's death will be an increased maturity on Kyle's part, as he'll realize that, hey, he is *the* Green Lantern and not just a standby while Hal gets his act back together; the world sees him that way as well.

The Inside Scoop: For all you romantics out there...sorry. Kyle and Donna's relationship will stay pretty much steady for the time being; there are no plans in the near or distant future to get the two hitched. *GL* editor Kevin Dooley thinks that Kyle and Donna just may have to wait as long as Lois and Clark did, or maybe a little longer to get married. Also, fans of Donna may want to keep an eye on *Wonder Woman*, where John Byrne reportedly has big plans in store for her, including a possible return to the role of Wonder...something.

THE FLASH

Publisher: DC Comics
Creative Team: Mark Waid, Paul Ryan & John Nyberg
What You Should Know: Having been thrown into the timestream after defeating the evil speedster Savitar, the Flash (a.k.a. Wally West) made stops in several time periods, meeting distant relatives, and seeing firsthand the influence of the Flash throughout the future. Meanwhile, unknown to him, John Fox, the Flash of the 27th century, came to the 20th century and told the Flash's girlfriend, Linda Park, that Wally was never coming back. Over time, Fox fell for Linda in a big way, and got the idea that Linda was falling for him as well. The two worked together against Abra Kadabra, Dr. Polaris and Chillblaine, who had joined forces and put plans into motion to trigger another ice age. The duo's efforts weren't enough, however, and Linda was frozen solid just as the Flash returned from his trip through time. Working together, the Flashes defeated the villains, averting the ice age. Wally then returned Linda to her thawed state, and Fox bowed out of the picture. Following that nastiness, Wally and his pal the Pied Piper went up against a presidential candidate who Piper swore was the reincarnation of the old Flash foe, The Top.

What's Gonna Happen: *The Flash* #123 will pay homage to the classic "Flash of Two Worlds" story from the original series' issue #123 with "Flash of Two Cities," as Wally realizes that he may have outgrown Keystone City and vice versa. This theme will carry on for the next few months, and the effects of a hero's presence on a city will be examined. Let's think about it for a minute...insurance rates must be unbelievable, nobody wants to move there, let alone start a new business there, and property values in Wally's neighborhood must have dropped through the floor, since everyone knows that Wally is the villain-besieged Flash.

Following that set of themed issues, something big is in the works for the late #120s, but nobody's talking about it just yet...

Down the Road: Waid assures fans that he has heard their cries, and sometime in 1997 amends will be made in terms of some older villains who may have passed on before their time was up. But as always, be careful for what you wish for...

Also, there's interest at DC about doing a Flash Prestige Format one-shot, and former *Flash* Mike Wieringo has expressed interest in drawing it, so something cool may be on the horizon.

The Inside Scoop: Having recently added former *Flash* editor Brian Augustyn as a co-writer on the book, Waid says that fans probably won't notice much difference at all in the title.

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES

Publisher: DC Comics

Creative Teams: Tom Peyer, Tom McCraw, Lee Moder & Ron Boyd (*Legion of Super-Heroes*); Roger Stern, Tom McCraw, Jeffrey Moy & W.C. Carani (*Legionnaires*)

What You Should Know: Following their huge battle with Shrinking Violet, who was at the time possessed by the Emerald Eye and calling herself Emerald Vi, the satellite the Legion was on exploded, sending half of the team back in time to the 20th century, severely injuring the other half of the team, and sending Vi somewhere off into deep space.

Thinking their missing comrades dead, the 30th-century Legion mourned their loss, and slowly moved on. They quickly returned to action and Legion business, battling the sorceress Mysa for the life of their teammate Kinetix, and opening Legion tryouts in an attempt to fill their depleted ranks.

In the 20th century, the Legionnaires have had their hands full with plenty of activities, including aiding the other heroes during the "Final Night" storyline, helping Superman regain his powers and trying to keep Impulse from annoying them to death.

What's Gonna Happen: *Legionnaires*, chronicling the adventures of the 30th-century team, will continue the theme of magic in a futuristic society, as M'onel will search through space for Shrinking Violet to see if she's still possessed by the power of the Eye. Meanwhile, in the 20th century, the heroes will face off with Dr. Psycho in *LSH* #90. The meeting of the kids of tomorrow with Wonder Woman's nemesis doesn't go well at all, and two of the Legionnaires are seriously wounded in the battle. This leads into a crossover between the groups in *LSH* #91 and *Legionnaires* #47, when the two seriously injured Legionnaires need to be "time-lifted" back to the 30th century immediately. Their emergency attempt at a return to the 30th century is successful for only some Legionnaires, leaving a small band stuck in yet another time period; this time, however, they're trapped without their memories. This story may actually spin off into a Legion one-shot or just be a double-sized issue, depending on scheduling. Also, the story will be a tribute to the late Curt Swan, a former Legion penciler, and will feature many classic Swan homages.

Also, *Legionnaires* #50 will feature the big blow-out with Mordru, the most powerful sorcerer of the 30th century.

Down the Road: Towards the end of the year, expect to see a return of the Fatal Five, since their first meeting with the Legion left many issues unresolved, such as whether or not the Empress will get the Emerald Eye she's after. Also, while Gim Allon himself may not be returning, word is an aspect of Leviathan will return to the Legion later in the year.

Events in both Legion books will be headed towards *Legion of Super-Heroes* #100, a 96-page special issue that will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the teens of tomorrow. Plans call for either a big wrap-up of ongoing storylines, or a huge celebration that showcases the rich history of the superteam. One way or another, expect to see many past and present Legion creators contributing to the book.

The Inside Scoop: Plans are still in the works for more Legion-inspired merchandise, including one major item that Legion fans have been dreaming about for years. Though DC ain't talkin', can anyone say "Legion flight ring"?

Other Cool Buzz From DC in 1997: Look for *Kingdom*, an ongoing series that depicts events that precede *Kingdom Come*. Mark Waid and Alex Ross will consult on the series, which will debut next summer....Look for *Adventures in the DC Universe*, a book that's set in the DC "animated" universe of "Batman: The Animated Series" and "Superman," and stars other DC characters....February is a big *Starman* month, with a new trade paperback and a good jumping-on point for new readers....Keep an eye out for *Sovereign Seven* #19-#23, because that's where you'll see the reunion of longtime *Uncanny X-Men* collaborators Chris Claremont and Dave Cockrum! After more than 10 years, the two are back together again, writing and illustrating a back-up story starring Cascade and Clark Kent.

SPAWN

Publisher: Image Comics

Creative Team: Todd McFarlane, Greg Capullo & Danny Miki

What You Should Know: Since his recent return from Hell, Spawn has revealed his identity to his best friend and husband-of-his-former-wife Terry Fitzgerald. The two have joined forces to bring down their former boss, Jason Wynn, who was responsible for Spawn's original death at the hands of Chapel. However, as Terry and Spawn delve deeper into the mystery surrounding Wynn, they'll find that the conspiracy that he's involved in runs deeper than they could have ever imagined.

What's Gonna Happen: The year will start off with a sequel of sorts to issue #29's child abuse story. The Frank brothers will come to New York as runaways, and Spawn will once again be reminded of the high cost of playing God in people's lives. Following the resolution of the child abuse story, creator Todd McFarlane plans on wrapping up most of the subplots that have been going on in the book since its early days. Detectives Sam and Twitch will wrap up their investigation of Jason Wynn and the Clown, while the saga of Cy-Gor will finally draw to a close around the middle of the year.

McFarlane also plans to focus on Spawn as a citizen of the alleys of New York, where he has set up his kingdom, with the bums as his subjects. Stories will look into what Spawn means to the bums and vice versa, along with what the bums do while Spawn is gone.

Finally, a new female character that played a role in Spawn's origin will be introduced this summer, just in time to tie in with the movie.

The Inside Scoop: McFarlane reported that filming on the live-action "Spawn" movie should wrap on Nov. 8, and the focus will then shift to post-production work, such as the addition of special effects, sound and music. The movie is tentatively scheduled for an August release. Also, sharp-sighted fans should keep an eye out for McFarlane, who has a cameo role as a bum in the movie.

The "Spawn" animated series debut on HBO has been pushed back to February or March, depending on when the latest glitches are worked out. Currently, it's looking like the series will be in a Friday night slot, just before the highly rated "Dennis Miller Show."

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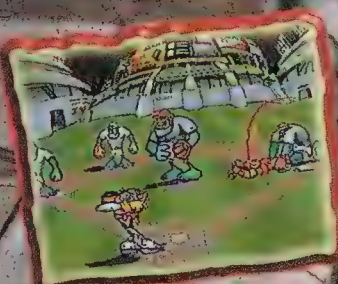

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GEN13

Publisher: Image Comics

Creative Team: Brandon Choi, J. Scott Campbell & Alex Garner

What You Should Know: Picking up the pieces following the events of the "Fire From Heaven" crossover proved especially challenging for the Gen13 team, but they have managed to pull through, thanks in part to their mentor, John Lynch, enrolling them in classes at the University of California at San Diego. While at college, though, the weirdness that surrounds them continues, as a mad scientist from the biology department makes plans to capture the kids in order to exploit their powers.

What's Gonna Happen: January kicks off with the second part of a two-part storyline that sees the big doofus of a supervillain called Helmut, who can't do anything right, try to kidnap the girls as they're out Christmas shopping. Soon after they wipe the floor with Helmut, the team learns that he was acting on the orders of another renegade test subject from Project Genesis, a 23-year-old genius whose body stopped growing at the age of 2. His name? Don't laugh: Baby Luv. The little guy will look like a miniature Elvis, and is looking for female subjects for some very...adult reasons. It seems that Baby Luv wants to start his own family, or at least get a head start on making Gen14. (Hey, do we smell spinoff material here?)

Down the Road: Most of '97 will involve I/O and the power struggle that's been going on within the shadow organization since the death of Miles Craven in "Fire From Heaven." Look for Ivana to show up as well. Involved with the I/O storyline will be the return of some of the Keepers. A renegade band of retrieval soldiers from I/O will start to hunt the kids in early summer (Is there anyone left in the Image Universe *not* hunting these kids? Sheesh!). Led by a grizzled I/O veteran who feels that he failed his duty by letting the kids escape in the first place, the group may get more than they bargained for when they finally catch up with the Gen-kids.

The Inside Scoop: Crossovers for everyone! Gen13 gets busy with the rest of the comics world in 1997, with *Spider-Man/Gen13* by Peter David, Stuart Immonen and Cam Smith; *Gen13/Batman* by Brandon Choi, J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner; and *Gen13/Generation X* (by a yet-undetermined creative team) later in the year.

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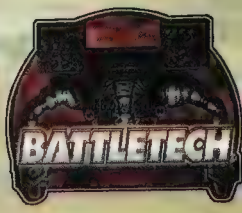

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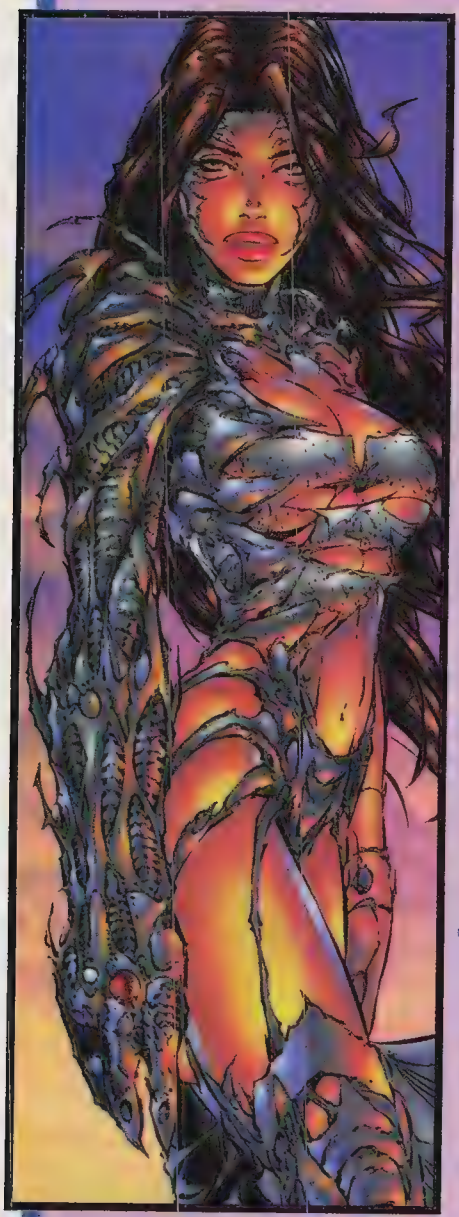
WITCHBLADE

Publisher: Image Comics
Creative Team: Christina Z., David Wohl, Michael Turner & D-Tron
What You Should Know: Ever since the Witchblade chose her as its bearer, New York City police detective Sara Pezzini's life hasn't resembled anything near normal. She suddenly found herself the object of millionaire Kenneth Irons' affections, who wanted the Witchblade gauntlet and sent the deadly Nottingham to grab it. In the fray, Nottingham professed his love for Sara—and that's on top of her cop buddy Jake doing the same. See, told you it was strange.

Ultimately, Sara was abducted by Irons, who told her the history of the Witchblade, and how he intended to take it from her, whether she liked it or not. Enraged at his treatment of Sara, Nottingham attacked Irons, sending them both off the top of Irons' high-rise.

Lately, Sara has been learning the true power of the Witchblade, and how it can be controlled by its bearer. She also learned that the collective memories of all the bearers are somehow stored inside the Witchblade, and she can access them to learn more of the history of the gauntlet at will.



What's Gonna Happen: The Microwave Murderer will finally make his move against Sara early in the year, and in the process of stopping him, Sara will learn about past 'blade-bearers, and their fates. Ultimately, she'll be forced to go head-to-head with the former bearer of the Witchblade as the case comes to a climax.

Sara will eventually come to terms with the Witchblade, and while she can't get it to work all the time, the two will strike a balance in regards to who's in charge of the killin'. During this time, she'll learn a lot about the Witchblade, including where it came from, why it chose her and what its mission is.

Down the Road: Irons' disappearance has left a power vacuum in the New York crime scene, the likes of which has never been seen before, so every two-bit hood within the five boroughs is going to be making a grab for the brass ring, giving Sara and the entire police force plenty to keep them busy.

Also, Sara will learn that Irons only represented the lowest rung of people (and other beings) who are after the Witchblade. And one last tease: Who ever said Irons and Nottingham were dead?

The Inside Scoop: In terms of other companies' interest, Witchblade is turning out to be the prettiest girl at the dance. Crossovers are planned for Witchblade and Wolverine, Elektra and the 22 Brides. While the folks at Top Cow are very happy with Witchblade's success so far, they really want to guard against oversaturating the market with too many Witchblade crossovers.

SHI

Publisher: Crusade Entertainment
Creative Team: Billy Tucci, Peter Gutierrez & Jason Orfalas
What You Should Know: Seeking revenge for the murder of her brother and father, Ana Ishikawa, a disciple of the Sohei monks of Japan, assumed the identity of the mysterious Shi. Finding Arashi, the murderer of the two men, in New York, Ana systematically set about destroying his criminal empire. Fearing that his life was in danger, Arashi sent for Tomoe, the finest warrior the Nara monks had to offer. Unknown to Arashi, Tomoe was Ana's college roommate and dear friend. In their battle, which tradition called for, Tomoe believed she had killed Ana. Driven mad with grief, Tomoe assumed the identity for Shi for a time, relenting when Ana ultimately returned, fully recovered from her injuries.

What's Gonna Happen: The final issue of the regular series, *Shi* #12, sets the stage for both *Shi/Daredevil* one-shots from Marvel and Crusade. The special issues team the two heroes up against a renegade branch of The Hand, the secret ninja cult.

Following the crossover will be January's *Shi: Rekishi* (*rekishi* means "history"), which will re-tell the Shi story as seen through Detective LaBianca's eyes. Drawn and written by Tucci, the one-shot will feature pin-ups of the highlights of Shi's adventures.

Fans of manga will want to pick up *Manga Shi 2000*, starting in February. The three-issue mini-series, drawn by Jason Orfalas, will tell the story of a future run by

ASH

Publisher: Event Comics
Creative Team: Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti
What You Should Know: Since becoming Ash as the result of bad burns, firefighter Ashley Quinn recently learned how he came to be in his present condition. In the near future, an alien, calling himself Adam, genetically transformed humans into his "godchildren." These godchildren systematically exterminated the human race on this future Earth, turning it into a nuclear winter-frozen hell. In a suicide mission, the period's greatest warrior programmed the container with his essence, and sent it back in time, in the hope of preventing the destruction to come.

When Quinn awoke from the story, Adam, already active in this time, was standing in front of him, and tried to persuade him to join his cause. Quinn refused, and barely escaped.

What's Gonna Happen: March will see the *Azrael/Ash* crossover with DC Comics, with a story by Denny O'Neil and art by Quesada and Palmiotti. In the regular *Ash* series, look for some big-time help to step in and lend a hand in order to get *Ash* back on a regular schedule. The following story arc will be written by James Robinson (*Starman*) with art by Quesada and Palmiotti, and will show

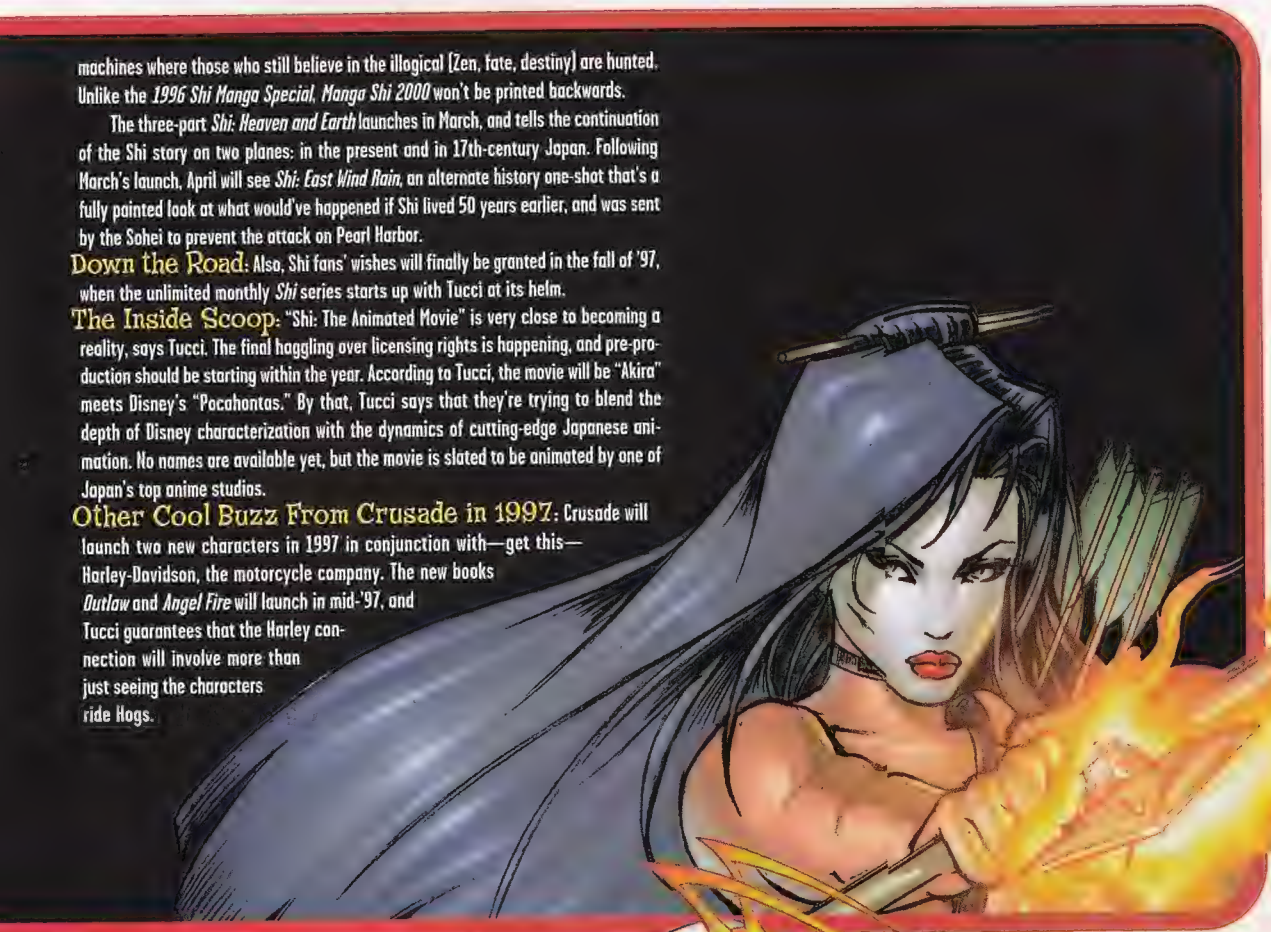
machines where those who still believe in the illogical (Zen, fate, destiny) are hunted. Unlike the *1996 Shi Manga Special*, *Manga Shi 2000* won't be printed backwards.

The three-part *Shi: Heaven and Earth* launches in March, and tells the continuation of the Shi story on two planes: in the present and in 17th-century Japan. Following March's launch, April will see *Shi: East Wind Rain*, an alternate history one-shot that's a fully painted look at what would've happened if Shi lived 50 years earlier, and was sent by the Sohei to prevent the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Down the Road: Also, Shi fans' wishes will finally be granted in the fall of '97, when the unlimited monthly *Shi* series starts up with Tucci at its helm.

The Inside Scoop: "Shi: The Animated Movie" is very close to becoming a reality, says Tucci. The final haggling over licensing rights is happening, and pre-production should be starting within the year. According to Tucci, the movie will be "Akira" meets Disney's "Pocahontas." By that, Tucci says that they're trying to blend the depth of Disney characterization with the dynamics of cutting-edge Japanese animation. No names are available yet, but the movie is slated to be animated by one of Japan's top anime studios.

Other Cool Buzz From Crusade in 1997: Crusade will launch two new characters in 1997 in conjunction with—get this—Harley-Davidson, the motorcycle company. The new books *Outlaw* and *Angel Fire* will launch in mid-'97, and Tucci guarantees that the Harley connection will involve more than just seeing the characters ride Hogs.



Ash attempting to prevent his future from occurring while running into Adam's "godchildren," who are constantly trying to give Ash a solid butt-kicking. Robinson is scheduled to remain on the book for three issues. Artist Humberto Ramos (*Impulse*) is also slated for at least six issues.

Down the Road: There will be an *Ash Special* by Mark Waid, Mike Wieringo, and Palmiotti, which is currently unscheduled (as well as unplotted).

The Inside Scoop: Plans for the Ash animated movie are still a "go," but Quesada says he still can't say anything about it. What's known for sure is that the movie is being produced by the Spielberg/Katzenberg/Geffen DreamWorks camp. Quesada and Palmiotti will serve as co-executive producers and consultants for the film, set to be released near the turn of the century.

Other Cool Buzz From Event in 1997: Spring will see the *22 Brides/Witchblade* crossover written by Garth Ennis and penciled by Amanda Conner, while the *22 Brides/Gen13* crossover by Waid, Ramos and Palmiotti is unscheduled.

Also on the board for 1997 are the launches of a number of creator-owned projects, including *The Hour of Reckoning* by Tony Harris (*Starman*), *Crimson Plague* by George Pérez, and the first creator-owned project co-written by Mark Waid and Brian Augustyn, and penciled by Humberto Ramos. W

Matthew Brady, who profiles Silver Surfer elsewhere in this issue, was almost killed for some of this information.

THE BIG 10

TEN EVENTS THAT ROCKED THE COMIC WORLD IN 1996

BY CRAIG SHUTT

HEROES REBORN

The news shocked readers: Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld, who bolted Marvel Comics in 1992 to start their own creator-run comics line and break Marvel's stranglehold on sales, were returning to work on four of Marvel's longest-running comics. Beginning in September, Lee and his studio began a run of 12 issues on *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man*, while Liefeld took on *Captain America* and *The Avengers*.

Those four books split off into a separate universe, where they started over with revised origins and new #1 issues. Even though the creators were given *carte blanche* to redesign costumes and characters, they both retained many elements, citing their great love for the Stan Lee/Jack Kirby originals.

The stunning move had some fans figuring Lee and Liefeld were in trouble and needed cash; others called them sell-outs for talking so big against Marvel but running back when the chance arose; still others were ticked off that the Mark Waid/Ron Garney run on *Cap* was going to end. To their credit, Lee and Liefeld answered all the charges, pointed out they had left Marvel to better their position (not to hurt the industry's leading publisher), and added their own regrets to changing *Cap* after it gained so much attention between the beginning of their Marvel discussions and the finalization.

The hype was heavy, and artwork and plot points began to leak out. Fans went postal when Liefeld took the "A" off Cap's forehead. Storm clouds thickened when Chuck Dixon resigned from *Captain America* and Jim Valentino acrimo-

Will "Heroes Reborn" exceed its 12-month run?

niously left *Avengers*. Finally, the issues burst onto the stands, and cyberheads burned up the Internet evaluating what worked, what didn't, how the artwork stacked up and how these treasured origins had been revamped.

Love it or hate it, "Heroes Reborn" has been the most-scrutinized and widely talked about project of 1996.

"Overall, the response has been pretty positive," says Lee. "There's obviously a vocal minority that's unhappy with the changes, but a lot of fans like what they're seeing." Liefeld agrees: "The interaction I have with fans, the letters I receive, the retailers I talk to are all positive about what we're doing. Something is making these books disappear, and it's not my mom who's buying all of them."

Both creators say they take the criticism in stride, having been braced for it. "The work is being held to a higher level of scrutiny than any other comic out there," Lee says. "But that goes hand in hand with the amount of hype it had."

In fact, Liefeld adds, he's so pumped that he plans to draw eight issues of *Cap* and two of *Avengers*, exceeding the contracted six. Further, there's no guarantee—or threat—that things will revert to the former status quo in 12 issues. The agreements can be renewed if sales and fan interest warrant, both sides agree. If they aren't continued, the heroes could return to the Marvel Universe either in their former forms or their new versions.

Adds Lee, "If I were placing odds, I'd say it's 70-30 that we'll only do the 12 issues we're contracted to do."

Liefeld is more optimistic of continuation. So much so, he says, that in October he gave Marvel a proposal for a new concept: Mutants Reborn, featuring a new team of *New Mutants*, the title on which Liefeld first made his rep. "Rob Liefeld and Marvel produce good results when they get together," he says. "Fans tell me they want to see me doing *New Mutants* again. We'll see what happens." ■

Rob Liefeld—the epicenter of Image's shockwaves

SHATTERED IMAGE

Image Comics, the number three comic book company in terms of sales, underwent a series of changes in 1996 that seemed to shake its foundation.

It was a year that saw two members return to the industry's largest competitor, one member resign and subsequently return, and another member resign and file suit against Image.

Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld kicked off the year with the announcement they were returning to work with Marvel on the "Heroes Reborn" project. (See related story.)

Some of the co-owners chose to leave the company altogether. Citing conflicts with co-founder Liefeld, Marc Silvestri pulled his Top Cow imprint from Image Comics. While Top Cow became its own entity, Silvestri maintained his status as a member of the Image Board of Directors.

As the year progressed, Liefeld became more and more a source of tension with other Image owners. Co-founder Jim Valentino clashed with Liefeld over a writing stint on the "Heroes Reborn" project, *The Avengers*. When Liefeld opted to remove Valentino as scripter, offering the opportunity to remain co-plotter, Valentino resigned and charged Liefeld for non-payment.

Liefeld resigned on September 4, at the same time the Image Board of Directors was planning to vote him out. "Image was something that I've always been devoted to," says Liefeld. "Unfortunately, we've come to this decision and we'll move forward from here."

The seemingly agreeable departure turned hostile when Liefeld sued Image for various reasons, including breach of contract (see "Wizard News" for details). Image, in turn, filed a countersuit. "I think that at this point, fighting this in the public eye is premature," says Image co-founder Jim Lee. "The truth will come forth."

"Unfortunately, this is where we find ourselves at this juncture and it's something we'll all deal with," said Liefeld.

Soon after Liefeld's resignation, Silvestri announced his return to the company.

"In the long run, Image will survive," says Silvestri. "Members may come and go, but as an institution, Image is as strong as Marvel or DC and it's here for the long haul." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

1996 RUNDOWN

THE PAST YEAR'S MAJOR BOOKS, EVENTS AND SURPRISES

Compiled by Marc Wilkofsky

NOTE: All comics are listed by their ship dates.

JANUARY

3 "Guest-Star Month" in the Superman books begins with *Action Comics* #719

8 Blizzard of '96 hits East Coast (Wizard Press closed for a day. Whoo!)

17 *Marvel versus DC* #2; "Contagion" starts spreading in *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #48; we meet Onslaught's herald Post in *X-Men* #50; Phil Donahue announces retirement from TV after nearly 30 years

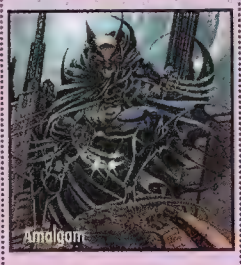
18 Lisa Marie Presley/Michael Jackson annulment announced

20 Comedian George Burns turns 100

22 Federal grand jury subpoenas Hillary Rodham Clinton to testify about documents related to investigation of Whitewater affair—first time in U.S. history that a First Lady had been required to appear before a grand jury

24 *Astro City* ends its first Image tour with #6; O.J. Simpson appears in first TV interview since trial, on BET channel

26 Planet Comics owners go on trial, facing charges including distribution of obscene materials



Amalgam

28 Jerry Siegel, co-creator of Superman, dies; Cowboys prove too tough for the Steelers in Super Bowl XXX, winning 27-17

29 Seaborn Adamson, Acclaim archivist, dies; *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue features its first-ever black cover model, Tyra Banks

30 Magic Johnson plays first regular-season NBA game since announcing retirement in 1991

FEBRUARY

2 Actor/singer/dancer Gene Kelly dies

7 X-Man fights Cable in *Cable* #30; *Sin City: That Yellow Bastard* #1; *Weapon Zero* #1

11 Frog-eating Lois Lane clone marries Clark Kent on "Lois & Clark"

12 Arnold Schwarzenegger confirmed as Mr. Freeze in "Batman and Robin"

14 Lois calls off engagement in *Action Comics* #720; *Gen13: Ordinary Heroes* #1

15 McLean Stevenson ("M*A*S*H") dies

20 "Generation X" TV movie airs to mixed reviews

21 Batman beats Captain America in *Marvel versus DC* #3; Mark Waid writes *X-Men* with #51; *Death: The Time of Your Life* #1; *Cavewoman* #1 (Caliber series)

28 Amalgam comics sweep comic stores; Seal and Alanis Morissette sweep the Grammys; Princess Diana of Wales announces that she's divorcing Prince Charles

29 New York City Comic Book Spectacular convention abruptly canceled; heads of four major U.S. TV networks

THE BIG 10

ENNIS, ANYONE?

The buzz on Garth Ennis started in 1995 when the former *Hellblazer* writer kicked off *Preacher* with his former *Hellblazer* mate, artist Steve Dillon. It grew rapidly as word spread that the title's over-the-top language, violence, sexual themes and characters produced some great stories.

Then *Hitman* hit in February, carrying some of that style into the DC Universe. That was followed by *Medieval Spawn/Witchblade* for Top Cow, *Bloody Mary* for DC's Helix, *The Darkness* for Top Cow and *Shadowman* for Acclaim. And in 1997, we'll see mini-series about the Unknown Soldier and Enemy Ace. In fact, Ennis is so busy, he's dropped a number of big projects that he previously agreed to including WildStorm's *WildC.A.T.S* and Top Cow's *Ripclaw*.

"Garth is prolific and very versatile," says Axel Alonzo, his Vertigo editor. "Working with him on *Preacher* and *Unknown Soldier* [which Alonzo helped develop] is literally like working with two different writers. On *Preacher*, he's flexing a different set of muscles."

Ennis writes *Preacher* for himself, the writer says, highlighting themes he's interested in. It's also the book that made him a household name with many fans. "*Preacher* seems to have caught people's imagination," says Ennis. "The extreme nature of the material, the sense that anything can happen anytime, the dark humor—all that has been popular in the past two or three years."

Readers will see his versatility with next year's projects. "People will really be able to assess what Garth's capable of in the first quarter of 1997," says Alonzo. "Anyone who tries to pigeon-hole him will see he's capable of turning in some of the most-emotionally complex stories around." ■

Onslaught (above) left his mark on the Marvel Universe this summer (especially on Jean Grey, opposite)

MARVEL FACES AN ONSLAUGHT

"'Onslaught' was the most-difficult crossover we've done in a very long while," says Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras. The story already was well into development when the deal was made for Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld to take over *Fantastic Four*, *Iron Man*, *The Avengers* and *Captain America*. "We decided to meld the two stories, because it was so natural," he says. "It took a lot of coordination, but I was pleased with the result. Naturally, there are some quirks I would have liked to fix, but that always happens."

Onslaught was a mysterious, nearly unstoppable foe who wanted to recreate the world to his liking. After a few cameos, he finally burst loose in the bookend title, *Onslaught: X-Men* in June. The battle to stop him from reaching his terrifying goal wound through nearly every Marvel book in June and July, concluding in the second bookend title, *Onslaught: Marvel Universe*, in August. Along the way, his identity was revealed to be Professor X, whose mind had become tainted by absorbing the evil-mutant Magneto's mind in 1993's *X-Men* #25. The battle to stop Onslaught ultimately ripped a hole in the Marvel Universe that transported key figures to the "Heroes Reborn" universe, leaving those left behind believing the others were dead.

The story was well received by retailers

and large cable-TV companies pledge to develop system for rating programs based on their level of violent and sexual content

MARCH

2 "Hallelujah Con" replaces NYC Comic Book Spectacular, held in NYC church basement

4 Fabian Nicieza becomes editor-in-chief of Acclaim Comics

6 *DC versus Marvel* #4; *Hitman* #1; *Hellblazer* #100; *Wolverine* #100 has Wolvie become more beastly; *Dart* #1; Jack Abel, veteran penciler, inker and production artist, dies

9 Comedian George Burns dies

13 Thomas Hamilton opens fire on kindergarten class in Dunblane, Scotland, killing 16 children, their teacher and then himself

14 NCAA tournament begins

20 *Batman* #530 teams up Bats and Deadman

24 *Wizard* Editor-in-Chief Pat McCallum wins *Wizard* Chili Bake-Off after Production Director Doug Goldstein is disqualified for using canned chili

25 "Braveheart" rips through Academy Awards; FBI begins standoff with armed members of an antitax group known as The Freemen, in eastern Montana

27 *Lady Death: The Odyssey* #1

APRIL

1 Kentucky takes NCAA tourney, beating Syracuse 76-67

3 *Sandman* #75, Morpheus' farewell issue, finally ships; *Batman Black & White* #1; Karl Kesel and Cary Nord liven up *Daredevil* with #353; *Grifter/Shi* #1

10 *Medieval Spawn/Witchblade* #1

11 7-year-old Jessica Dubroff, attempting to set record for being youngest person to pilot plane across U.S., crashes during thunderstorm

17 *The Dreaming* #1 returns several Sandman characters; *22 Brides* #1; readers' vote against Savage Dragon marrying Rapture revealed in #27

22 Humor writer Erma Bombeck dies

24 *The Further Adventures of Cyclops & Phoenix* #1 uncovers Mr. Sinister's origin; Avengelyne's ongoing series begins

MAY

1 John Stewart is crippled in *Green Lantern* #75

2 Phil Donahue tapes his last show

and fans, with lots of readers trying to guess Onslaught's identity ahead of time. Harras' biggest surprise about the event, he admits, was that so many fans *were* surprised by the revelation. "I didn't think this was one of our best-kept secrets."

He also was surprised that fans seemed startled when the ending left the professor without his powers. "We've written Xavier out, and we have more plans for the repercussions of this event," he says.

Besides some long-term changes, there will be a number of new and lower-profile heroes stepping up to protect the Marvel Universe.

A major push is planned for the Thunderbolts, which comprises superhumans who haven't used their powers heroically before. (For more on these guys, see the "First Look" in *Wizard* #64.) Also, in the works is a team led by Power Man and Iron Fist to be known as Power Corps.

"We don't want a lot of guys planning to form a new Avengers," Harras says. "But we do want to fill the gap with new heroes. While there definitely will be a sense of loss felt in the Marvel Universe, there also are heroes left behind, and they respond to challenges like this." ■

WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?

THE TOP 10 BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENTS OF 1996

Marvel versus DC #3—The whole "reader vote" became a popularity contest at the expense of a good story. While it was fun seeing the characters from the different universes mix it up, there was *no way* Wolverine should have beaten Lobo. Next time, let the *writers* write the story.

Mark Waid on X-Men—"Comics' hottest writer on comics' hottest title!" Unfortunately, his work on *X-Men* was easily his weakest, and his six-month stint was shorter than a Liz Taylor marriage.

Waid/Garney Off Cap—Mark Waid and Ron Garney breathed more life into *Captain America* than it had seen in practically a decade, creating buzz with fans that saw the book steadily climb the sales charts. Marvel's reaction: cut the creators loose and take the "Heroes Reborn" short-term quick fix.

Prof. X as the X-Traitor—This attempt at a "Dark Phoenix"-style story was a bit of a baffler. And now Marvel is planning to write the professor out of the series? It's been proven that part of what makes the X-Men work is having a father figure like Prof. X at the helm. Without him, a vital ingredient is missing.

Bad Comic Flicks—When are we finally gonna see a good comic book movie? "The Crow: City of Angels," "Barb Wire" and "The Phantom" all sucked. Let's hope the next crop of films—including "Batman and Robin" and "Spawn"—are actually worth paying $7.50 to see.

Death of Hal Jordan—To rejuvenate *Green Lantern*, DC brought Kyle Rayner in as GL, but had to get Hal Jordan—a GL of 30 years—out of the picture. Instead of the hero's death he deserved (read: Flash in *Crisis on Infinite Earths*), they kept him in the background as a nutso villain. This was insurance in case the new direction didn't work out, so they could bring him back as GL. Kyle worked out and Hal died as the mass-murderer Parallax. Next time, crap or get off the pot.

Spawn's New Face—The much-ballyhooed new Spawn face ended up being a minor modification of his old one. For a great designer who breathed new visual life into Spider-Man, McFarlane failed to deliver on the hype.

Wolverine's Adamantium—Just get on with it already. Turning Logan into a bestial, noseless animal (and *still* no adamantium) is pointless. Get him back to what makes him great: A loose cannon with adamantium claws.

"Heroes Reborn"—This "starting from scratch" maneuver by Marvel was unnecessary. The best part about the Marvel Universe is that its continuity is so great, you don't need to blow it all up.

Superman Wedding—DC built a big story on how Lois breaks up with Clark...and 10 seconds later they get *married*? Why? DC's owner, Warner Bros., wanted the comics to tie in with the wedding on the "Lois & Clark" TV show. The result? A rushed, forced storyline that was out of place and reinforced a comic industry negative: corporate suits are the kind of cooks the industry pot doesn't need. ■ *The* Wizard *Staff*

3 "Barb Wire" opens
8 The long-awaited *Kingdom Come* #1; *Wizard* Managing Editor Scott Cramling wins the *Wizard* Sushi-Off by devouring 66 pieces of sushi in one sitting (ugh!)

11 Wizard Press staffers plummet to their doom going skydiving; Defense Con held in Oklahoma City to benefit Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
15 *Thor* #500 gives Marvel its first 500th issue; artist Chris Bachalo returns to *Generation X* with #17
22 Onslaught revealed to be Prof. Xavier in *X-Men* #54; new Green Lantern teams up with new Green Arrow for first time in *Green Lantern* #76
29 Apparition returns in *Legion of Super-Heroes* #82; *Ash* #0
30 "Entertainment Tonight" co-host John Tesh tapes his final show

JUNE
5 The X-Men take on Onslaught for the first time in *Onslaught: X-Men* #1; an era ends with *Captain America* #454, the final issue before "Heroes Reborn"; Pamela Anderson Lee gives birth to Brandon Thomas Lee
6 Marc Silvestri and his Top Cow studio leave Image
13 Last 16 members of "Freemen" surrender, after 81-day standoff
16 Superman artist Curt Swan dies
18 Former university professor Theodore J. Kaczynski (the "Unabomber") charged with 10 felony counts by federal grand jury
19 *Preacher Special: Saint of Killers* #1; *Excalibur* reaches #100; *Star Slammers Special* features Walter Simonson's first Legend work
21 Marvel sweeps *Wizard* Fan Awards at Dragon*Con in Atlanta
26 Bane returns in *Detective Comics* #700; Leviathan dies in *Legion of Super-Heroes* #83; Onslaught's origin revealed in *Wolverine* #104; Image's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* #1; *Hellboy: Wake the Devil* #1 features Gary Gianni's first Legend work in a "Monster-

THE BIG 10

KINGDOM COME DELIVERS ON HYPE

Kingdom Come, the four-issue Elseworlds story by Mark Waid and Alex Ross, rocked comics fans all summer. It combined an intriguing look into a possible future with incredibly detailed character designs for nearly every DC character and painted artwork that dazzled readers. Although retailers were braced for big sales and ordered accordingly, they were stunned by how fast the issues sold out.

"I was surprised by the fact that it could actually be received beyond expectations," Ross admits. "I didn't think it could possibly exceed the generous reaction I got with *Marvels* [Ross' earlier mini-series about the beginnings of the Marvel Universe]. But it did." Adds Waid, "I was staggered. My most horrific fear for two years was that because of all the advance hype, there was no way to live up to it. The pressure was insane. When the last issue came out and people didn't say, 'Man, you really blew the ending,' I was walking on air."

The series centered on an apocalyptic war between an older regime of mostly retired heroes, led by Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, and a new generation of heroes who cared more about battle glory than about the welfare of the innocent citizens they supposedly were protecting. The older heroes decided they had to rein in the new heroes, escalating tensions until the world was brought to the brink of destruction. The story was seen through the eyes of a minister, who accompanied the Spectre and provided a human interpretation of events as the duo watched events spiral toward a super-Armageddon.

With a few key characters at its center, the story barely touched on the dozens of characters Ross designed, leaving fans wanting more and asking plenty of questions. "The most-asked question, hands down, was, 'Who was Green Lantern?' " Waid says. (The answer: Alan Scott, with his daughter Jade as the young Green Lantern.) The question Ross heard the most was: Were those really the Cosby kids that Batman's robots caught in issue #1? Of course they weren't—but they sure looked like them.

Kingdom Come rolled with the punches and made good with fans

Do the creators have any last words on the book, now that the hoopla has died? "Oh, I don't think *Kingdom Come* will ever die," Ross laughs. Indeed, the creators currently are working on two hardcover editions that will expand the story, with a four-page section showcasing the New Gods' role and an eight-page epilogue. "I want to emphasize," Waid says, "that if you have the issues, you read the story. You're not being cheated if you miss this stuff. This is just us coming out for a real quick encore." In addition, there will be an ongoing *Kingdom* series from DC as a prequel to the mini-series. See this month's "Wizard News" for more info. ■

SELF-PUBLISHERS SEEK SHELTER

Wracked by distributor upheaval, a plummeting market and the growing realization that creative people aren't always great business and marketing people, many self-publishers found shelter under creator-friendly publishing imprints.

Among those moving in 1996 was Kurt Busiek, who took his high-profile *Astro City* out of the general Image imprint, where he controlled every function, and made it the flagship book in Jim Lee's new Homage Comics line. Terry Moore soon followed with his award-winning *Strangers in Paradise*.

After signing Drew Hayes' *Poison Elves* in June of 1995, Sirius Entertainment added Teri Wood's *Wandering Star* in 1996. The same

Men" back-up; *Wizard* hits fifth anniversary with issue #50

27 Marvel and Fox network sign agreement giving Fox rights to Marvel characters for new TV series over next seven years

29 Steve Geppi, owner of Diamond Comics Distributors, buys partly restored *Action Comics* #1 for $61,900 at Sotheby's auction

JULY

2 "Independence Day" lands in theaters and begins breaking box office records; DC artist Mike Parobeck dies

3 DC's Helix imprint begins with *Cyberella* #1; Mike Wieringo takes on *Sensational Spider-Man* with #8; *Spawn* #50; Russian President Boris Yeltsin defeats Communist Party candidate Gennadi Zyuganov in a runoff presidential election

4 Marvel launches online service on America Online

6 President Clinton announces major overhaul of federal system of inspections for meat and poultry products; *Wizard* Managing Editor Scott Gramling steals Jim Lee's bathrobe at San Diego Con

7 U.S. space shuttle Columbia finishes successful medical and science mission that was longest flight ever for a shuttle

10 *Supergirl* begins; true Beast vs. Dark Beast in *X-Factor* #126

12 Smashing Pumpkins back-up musician Jonathan Melvoin found dead of a drug overdose

13 *Wizard* staffers Brian Cunningham, Mike Fasolo, Andrew Kardon and Pat McCallum move in together (chaos ensues)

17 Iron Man's original series ends with #332 thanks to "Heroes Reborn"; TWA Flight 800 explodes by Long Island, N.Y., killing 230

19 100th Olympic Games begins in Atlanta

21 New York Rangers sign star center Wayne Gretzky to two-year contract

23 U.S. women's gymnastics team becomes first in history to win gold medal

24 The original volumes of *Avengers* (#402) and *Fantastic Four* (#416) end thanks to "Heroes Reborn"

26 Diamond Comics Distributors acquires selected assets of Capital City Distribution

27 Bomb explodes in Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park, killing one and injuring over 100

29 Olympic track star Carl Lewis wins his ninth gold medal

trend occurred at Caliber, which announced its new all-ages line, Tapestry, consisting of both existing and new titles. Self-published titles joining included *Boondoggle*, *The Hoon*, *Patty Cake*, *Shades of Gray*, *Explorers* and *Trollords*. In September, Caliber announced it would also publish the formerly self-published *Dreamwalker*, *Strange Attractors* and *Adventure Strip Digest*. Meanwhile, *Hepcats* moved to Antarctic Press and *A Distant Soil* joined Erik Larsen's Highbrow Studios at Image.

"It's much harder for self-published books to gain attention in today's market," explains Gary Reed, Caliber publisher. By joining a publisher, creators gain financial backing, publishing expertise and clout with distributors. "Where once eight creators meant Diamond [Distributors] had to deal with eight vendors, eight invoices and eight accounting systems, now they can deal with one, which saves them money and time," he explains. "That means they can be more lenient if the book doesn't make them a lot of money."

Most of the books had low circulations—but publishing muscle changed that fast. "At worst, every book we've picked up has doubled its sales," says Sirius publisher Robb Horan. Busiek too reports his sales "shot up" at Homage, while Reed says some Caliber books quadrupled sales.

"Support for personal vision in comics is out there," Busiek says. "But connecting to those readers is increasingly harder. It used to be that if you could hold out until issue #8, word of mouth could win you a big enough following to survive. Now the market is in much worse shape. The combination of the individual creator's vision and a publisher's resources has created a new dynamic for comics." ■

NEW YEAR'S SOLUTIONS

THE 10 THINGS WIZARD WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN 1997

One Marvel Universe—Get the core Marvel heroes back into the original Marvel Universe, using pre-"Heroes Reborn" continuity. Marvel didn't have to start over with those books—just get some better writers and stronger editors to take charge. The "HR" Earth would be a tasty snack for Galactus anyway.

More Amalgam—This was cool and fun, reminding us what comics *should* be. What the creators have to remember, though, is that aside from just the novelty of the event, fans dig good stories too. Don't let the gimmick overshadow how great these stories can be!

Continue Improving Spidey—We'd love to see our "Spidey Dream Team" writers Roger Stern (THE Spidey writer of the '80s), Kurt Busiek (helming today's best Spidey book, *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*) and Mark Waid (he'd be great) on the books. (One other thing: No Spider-Baby. It's bad enough that Marvel got Peter Parker, the perennial bachelor with girl problems, married. But don't EVER let the "presumed dead" Parker child from "Revelations" rear its ugly head. It would mess up Spidey's "essence" even more.)

X-Men Self-Contained—Since there's no real heavy-duty continuity in these books anyway, why not keep the stories in *Uncanny* and *X-Men* within their respective titles? It'd make for tighter series and more "new-reader friendliness."

No 'Event' Specials—Keep big "event" stories inside the covers of the regular titles, meaning no more "special" bookends or mini-series. It takes the focus away from the individual titles. (Take note: Dark Phoenix died in *Uncanny X-Men* #137, not in *Death of Phoenix: Omega*.)

"Batman & Robin"—With a cast that big, we hope there's enough room for an actual *story*.

Keep Characters in Character—Focus on who the characters are and how they act. Spidey would never (or even *attempt* to) kill the Green Goblin (like he shockingly did in *Spider-Man* #75). Captain America wouldn't punch out a U.S. general (like in *Cap* #446). Even Superman acted uncharastically antagonistic in *Final Night* #1.

Villains Should Stay Villains—An amnesiac Magneto in the X-Men? This guy works best as a mass-murdering megalomaniac. Sabretooth as an unwilling member of X-Factor? No way—let him antagonize the X-Men. Venom? We don't even *care* who he is anymore.

Death to T&A Schlock—There's no question that comics have always portrayed men and women in top physical perfection (shining examples of what society deems "beautiful"), but let's try and sell more comics with great storytelling through art *and* writing.

Reader-Friendly Comics—Picking up a comic these days as a first-time reader is risky business. Even if it's a top-strip origin synopsis (as seen in *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*) or a character roll call (in the Legion of Super-Heroes books), it's not too much to ask for brief reintroductions to characters, secret identities and powers each issue. It doesn't distract consistent readers, it only serves to keep new ones.

■ *The Wizard Staff*

31 *X-Men vs. Brood: Day of Wrath* #1; *New Warriors* ends with #75; Art Adams finally finishes *Monkeyman & O'Brien* #1

AUGUST

7 *Onslaught: Marvel Universe* catapults several Marvel heroes to "Heroes Reborn" world; *Nightwing* #1; *X-Files* #0 begins adaptations of the TV episodes

10 U.S. Presidential nominee Bob Dole announces Jack Kemp as his running mate

12 Marvel Executive Editor Mark Cruenwald dies

14 *Kingdom Come* #4; *DV8* #1; *Ghost Rider* gets a new costume and bike in #78

15 Homage Comics unites with Image Comics

16 Child in Illinois falls into gorilla pit, but is miraculously saved by gorilla

21 *Gen*^{13} #13A

24 Four women are admitted to the Citadel, a previously all-male military academy in Charleston, S.C.

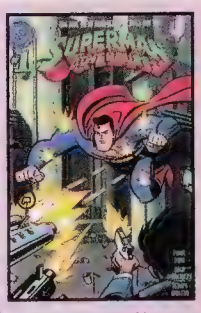
28 *The Teen Titans* #1; *Legion of Super-Heroes* gets a new direction in the 20th century with issue #85; *Swamp Thing* ends with #171; Alan Moore hops on *Supreme* with #41

30 Wizard Press prez Careb Shamus proposes to Lisa Ceisenheimer (the poor girl says yes); the less-successful sequel "The Crow: City of Angels"

SEPTEMBER

1 *Wizard* Design Manager Steve Blackwell takes the marital plunge with Jennifer King

4 Rob Liefeld resigns from Image Comics; Jim Lee's *Fantastic Four* #1 ships; *The Final Night* #1; *Superman Adventures* #1; Bishop and Shard's story begins in *X.S.E.* #1; Betty and Reggie have a surprising one-time fling in *Betty* #43



5 The Smashing Pumpkins sweep the MTV Video Music Awards

6 "Superman" animated series debuts with special prime-time show

7 Bibi Besch, who played Carol Marcus in "Star Trek II," dies

THE BIG 10

After 58 years, Lois and Clark tie the knot, opening new story possibilities for Superman

SUPES/LOIS SAY I DO

Readers were caught unawares by the August announcement that Clark Kent and Lois Lane would wed in an October special issue. Called *Superman: The Wedding Album*, it was timed to appear the week of the October 6th wedding episode of "Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman." Some readers feared that as a result of resoliciting issues and changing schedules so the comic could coincide with the TV show, the story would be rushed. But that's not the case, says writer Dan Jurgens.

"As soon as they got engaged [in 1990], we started planning the wedding," he says. "The story we did just used all those ideas in one big issue. The one inconvenience was that Lois had broken up with Clark [in the comic]. But we'd always planned for them to split before the wedding and go through a personal crisis so they would know without a doubt that this is what they wanted to do. So it worked pretty well in that regard."

The story began with the duo's romantic reconciliation and ran through every wedding's highlights, such as picking a wedding dress, informing the in-laws, finding an apartment, attending a bachelor's party and planning the honeymoon. It culminated with a gatefold page of the newlyweds kissing as the Superman creative team looked on. A huge roster of current and former creators also contributed to the issue through plot, script, pencil and ink chores on different segments.

Upcoming stories will include the couple's new home life, he adds, but their relationship will change only subtly. "The biggest challenge is to keep from making Clark seem 10 years older just because he's married and an 'adult,' " he says. "We have to show that it's fun being married. They belong together and they're happy, and that brings a new dynamic to the stories." But since people in the DC Universe—especially women—think Superman is single, it could cause a few awkward moments, he notes. "There are a lot of story ideas there that could be fun."

As for children, Jurgens hopes he never sees them. "It's such a momentous step," he says. "And every baby in comics has been a disaster." ■

ACTION-PACKED YEAR FOR TOYS

For action figure collectors, 1996 marked one of the biggest years ever for licensed toy products. And it's no coincidence it was also a good year for science fiction properties and animated series based on comic books.

"Action figures are hot," says Toy Biz Product Manager Jesse Falcon, whose company enjoyed great success with its various X-Men, Spider-Man and Incredible Hulk lines. "If you've got a property that you can promote well, a cool movie like 'Independence Day' or even a Disney flick, then you've got a guaranteed market for people who collect action figures."

That "guaranteed market" was in full force in 1996—from Toy Biz's Marvel Comics offerings, through Kenner's Total Justice stab at DC Comics icons, Playmates' additions to its huge Star Trek line, Trendmasters' success with toys based on "Independence Day" and even McFarlane Toys' intricately sculpted Spawn action figures. At the top of the heap was Star Wars. With the much-anticipated release of the "Star Wars Special Edition" in January 1997, Kenner trotted out 30 different action figures.

Many toy companies are gearing up for what might be an even bigger year. "I think that [1997] is going to be a tough year for those companies who are not involved with 'Jurassic Park,' Batman and Disney," says Toy Biz Boys' Toys Vice President for Research and Development Joanne McLaughlin. Kenner will add lines based on the anticipated summer movie blockbusters "Lost World" (the "Jurassic Park" sequel) and "Batman & Robin." Meanwhile, Mattel, current Disney toy licenser, is all set to launch toys based on the upcoming Disney animated "Hercules" feature, while Trendmasters has secured the rights to toys based on "Mars Attacks!" and "Battlestar Galactica." ■ *Scott Beatty*

8 "Incredible Hulk" animated series premieres
11 Rob Liefeld launches Captain America's new adventures with #1; John Byrne begins new era for *New Gods* with #12
13 Rap star Tupac Shakur dies
14 Viewers get to vote for first time ever in Miss America Pageant (Kansas' Tara Dawn Holland wins)
17 O.J. 2: Simpson's civil trial begins
18 New Spawn series *Curse of the Spawn* begins; Jim Lee's *Iron Man* #1; artist Mike Deodato Jr. smashes into *Incredible Hulk* with #447; artist Roger Cruz takes on *X-Man* with #21
21 John F. Kennedy Jr. marries Carolyn Bessette (sorry, ladies); cops break up party of staffers Doug Goldstein, Chris Duncan and Matt Senreich after a night of...um...mirth
25 Hal Jordan sacrifices his life in *The Final Night* #4; Rob

Liefeld's *Avengers* #1; *Spectacular Spider-Man* #240 starts "Revelations," the story that squashes the Clone Saga for good; *Elektra* #1; *Magneto* #1; George Lucas announces he'll direct the first prequel in the next "Star Wars" trilogy

OCTOBER
2 *All Access* #1; DC's heroes mourn Hal Jordan in *Green Lantern* #81; *Spawn Bible* #1; *Barry Windsor-Smith: Storyteller* #1; Jim Lee returns to pencil *WildC.A.T.s*, with issue #31; *Sabertooth & Mystique* #1
3 "Bizarro World" episode of "Seinfeld" airs
4 The new "X-Files" season begins!
6 TV's version of Superman and Lois Lane finally wed on "Lois & Clark"; "Star Trek: 30 Years and Beyond" celebrates "Trek" anniversary; first presidential debate between Dole and Clinton
9 The comic book Supes marries Lois in *Superman: The Wedding Album* (costs ya $5 to attend); *Preacher Special: The Story of You-Know-Who* #1; Mary Jane loses her baby and Norman Osborn is revealed to be the mastermind behind the Clone fiasco in *Amazing Spider-Man* #418
13 The New York Yankees win the American League pennant,

dominating the Baltimore Orioles in five games
14 Madonna gives birth to (deep breath) Lourdes Maria Ciccone Leon
16 *Spider-Man* #75 brings back the one, true, thank-God-it's-all-over Spidey; *Batman: The Long Halloween* #1
17 The Atlanta Braves clobber

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THE BIG 10

SEND OUT THE CLONES

Spider-Man fans spoke, and they said two words: Clones Suck. But the Spider-office heard those words loud and clear, and it responded. "We listen to our fans, and they have spoken," Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras told *Wizard*. "It's back to basics." Seldom has fan reaction held so much power—but seldom has one story caused so many readers to drop so many titles.

The problems began two years ago, when Peter Parker discovered that a clone he thought he'd destroyed waaay back in *Amazing Spider-Man* #150 was still alive and living under the name of Ben Reilly. But there was also the stunning possibility that the man we'd known as Parker since that issue could be the clone! Reilly returned and became the Scarlet Spider, with the four Spider-titles splitting between the two while they tried to determine who was the clone. Evidence ultimately indicated that Peter was the clone and that Ben Reilly, who had lived as a drifter in the intervening years, was the "real" Peter. Reilly took over as Spider-Man, jazzing up the costume in the process. None of that sat well with readers—or at least with the readers who still cared about this convoluted and drawn-out storyline.

So the Spider-office responded with "Revelations," a four-part saga running through the October-released titles (*Spectacular Spider-Man* #240, *Sensational Spider-Man* #11, *Amazing Spider-Man* #418 and *Peter Parker, Spider-Man* #75). Ben Reilly died fighting the recently returned Green Goblin and turned to dust, proving that Reilly was really the clone. Peter continued to be Peter and the new costume went into mothballs.

"When the clone story first started, I thought it was fascinating as a reader," says Ralph Macchio, who moved into the Spider-Editor's chair during 1996. "The problem was that it went on too long."

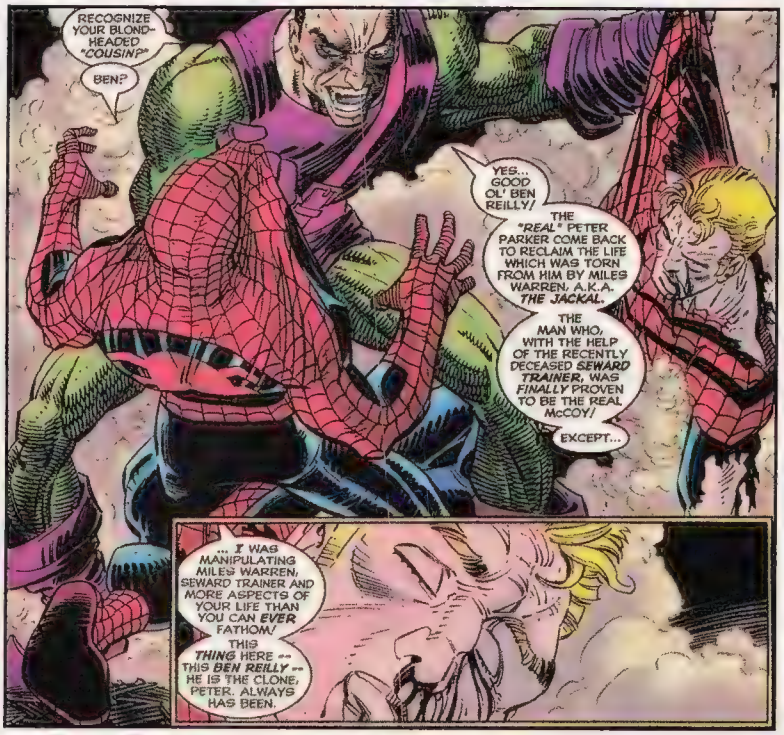
The major clue to reader unrest—besides dropping sales—was the letters. "Readers were soured on the idea that they'd been reading about a fake," he says. Even so, Macchio didn't want to just yank the rug out from under everything. "All the letters were saying, 'Kill Ben Reilly!' and that was easy, we could have done that the next issue," he explains. "I wanted readers to miss him when he was gone."

To mark the change, the adjectiveless *Spider-Man* became *Peter Parker, Spider-Man*. The other titles also revamped their logos to provide distinctive identities. That differentiation also extends inside, as continued stories will run month-to-month, not from one title to another.

As all this takes place, the Parkers have some adjustments to make. The loss of their daughter and the horrific return of Norman Osborn will remain with the couple as they move ahead with their lives. Both return to college, and money problems will loom large, resulting in them moving back into the Parker homestead near Mary Jane's Aunt Anna Watson.

Meanwhile, Peter has to shake out the cobwebs—literally. "This guy is rusty," Macchio says. "He has to get used to being Spider-Man again, and he's going to be a little off." That means villains like the Trapster can make a fool of him—at least to start. "It's going to be interesting, because in some ways, we're starting over with a Spider-Man who's pretty new at this." ■

The presumed-dead Norman Osborn was behind all of Peter Parker's recent woes



the St. Louis Cardinals in Game 7, taking the National League pennant

23 *Spawn the Impaler* #1; Acclaim relaunches its Valiant Heroes line with *X-O Manowar* #1; *Lady Death: The Crucible*

#1; *Madman*'s Mike Allred draws *Untold Tales of Spider-Man '96*

25 Dynamic Forces' New York City con begins

26 Second annual *Wizard* Halloween party sees everybody "Bob for...Stuff"; New York Yankees win the 1997 World Series, beating the Atlanta Braves 3-2 in Game 6

30 Joe Kubert's critically acclaimed *Fax From Sarajevo*; *World's Finest: Superboy/Robin* #1

NOVEMBER

5 U.S. Election Day

6 *JLA* #1 begins new era for superteam; *Spider-Man/Gen13*; *Spider-Man: Hobgoblin Lives!* #1

13 Presidential nominee Graydon Creed assassinated in *X-Factor* #130; *Ash/22 Brides* #1

20 *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns (10th Anniversary Edition)* hardcover; *Gen13 Bootleg* #1 puts team in dreamworld; *The Darkness* #1

22 The Next Generation crew takes on the Borg in "Star Trek: First Contact"

27 *Deadpool* #1; *Mars Attacks: The Official Movie Adaptation* #1; *Mars Attacks/The Savage Dragon* #1

DECEMBER

4 *Daredevil/Shi: Blind Faith* #1; *Weapon Zero/Silver Surfer* begins set of Marvel/Top Cow crossovers

11 *Green Lantern/Flash: Faster Friends* Part I; Black Manta returns in *Aquaman* #29; *Onslaught: Epilogue*; *Logan: Shadow Society* reveals Wolvie's pre-X-adventures; *Mars Attacks the Image Universe* #1; *Shi/Daredevil: Honor Thy Mother* #1

13 "Mars Attacks!" blasts into theaters

18 Doctor Strange learns fate of missing Marvel heroes in *Incredible Hulk* #450; *Catwoman/Vampirella: The Furies*; *Tales from the Age of Apocalypse*

27 BIG ends its regular comic book line with *Lady Justice* #9 ●

Rumors fly that Marvel and DC will revisit Amalgam in 1997

AMALGAM A SURPRISE SMASH

The Amalgam Universe took readers completely by surprise because Marvel and DC had really only stoked fans for the majorly hyped *Marvel versus DC/DC versus Marvel* mini-series that began last December. It pitted major Marvel heroes against major DC heroes in a four-issue series billed as "The Showdown of the Century," allowing fans to vote for key match-ups in issue #3. But at the end of that issue, the two universes collided to create a new universe, populated with characters sporting bits and pieces from both Marvel and DC characters. The result was 12 one-shot issues released in the last week of February by "Amalgam Comics." Fans absolutely loved them.

The titles consisted of *Bullets and Bracelets*, *Magneto and the Magnetic Men*, *Speed Demon*, *Spider-Boy*, *X-Patrol* and *Bruce Wayne, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* from Marvel, and *Amazon*, *Assassins*, *Doctor Strangefate*, *JLX*, *Legends of the Dark Claw* and *Super-Soldier* from DC. The most popular of the bunch were *Dark Claw* (combining Batman and Wolverine) and *Spider-Boy* (a rollicking amalgamation of Spider-Man and Superboy).

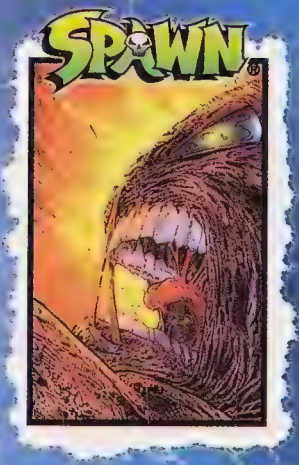
"I think the fans liked it because it had never been done and it was oriented to long-time readers," says Ron Marz, who wrote two of the battle issues as well as *Dr. Strangefate*. "Newer readers could enjoy the basic jokes, but older readers got a kick out of everything, from the background characters to the letters columns. And the creators could go all out because it was a one-issue commitment."

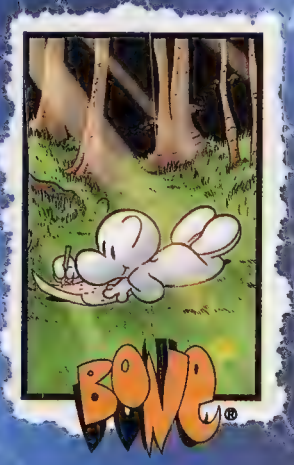
At the time, both Marvel and DC vowed the event was a one-time deal—but they hadn't counted on it being such an overwhelming hit. So in October, Marz again was at the helm as the Big Two rejoined forces for *All Access*, a four-issue series featuring Access, who was created when the worlds went smoosh. "The Amalgam Universe is always in danger of returning if someone stays too long in the other universe," Marz explains. "Access' job is to ensure that doesn't happen."

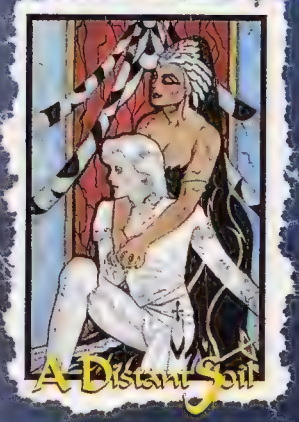
And with rumors escalating of a possible Amalgam sequel sometime in 1997, fans and creators have plenty to look forward to. "I hope and pray this will be a continuing event," Marz says. "I'd love to do another. They're so much fun."

Craig Shutt, who also profiles Daredevil *this month, hopes one of next year's Top 10 Big Events is headlined, "Marvel Movie Becomes A Smash!" But he isn't holding his breath.*

THERE'S NEVER BEEN AN







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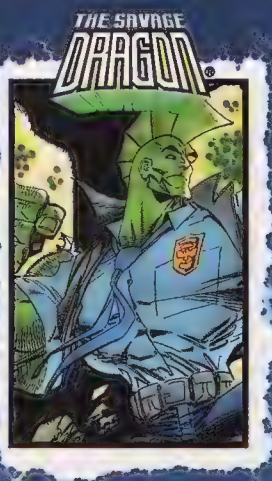

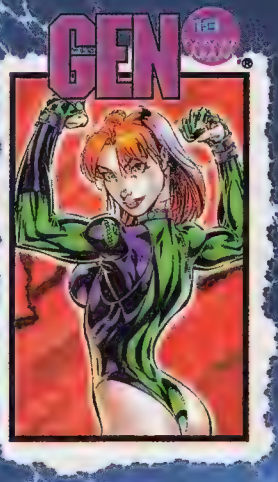

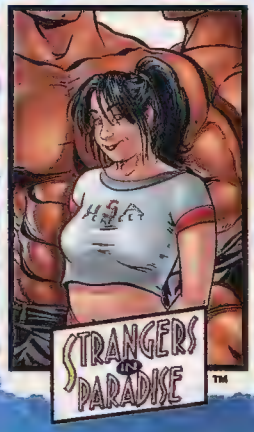

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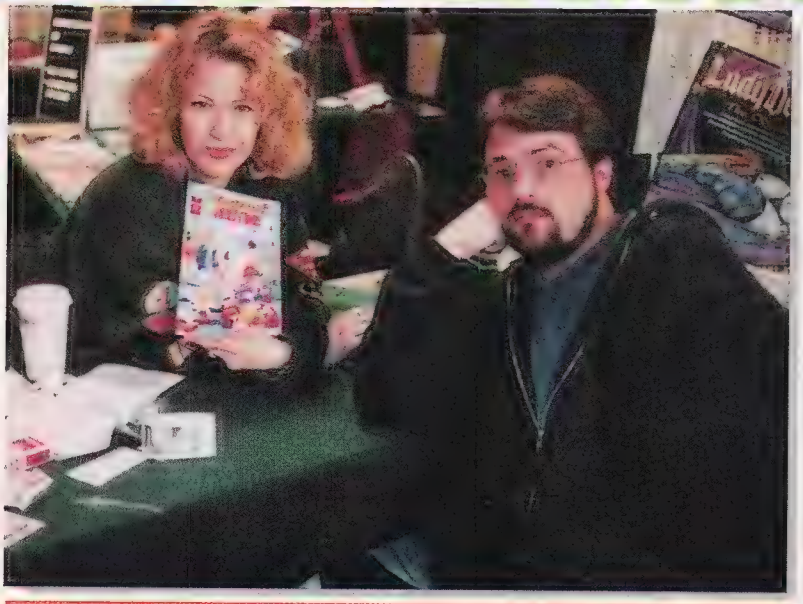
THIS OFFER EXPIRES FEBRUARY 17, 1997.

TRAILER PARK

Wizard's column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that

SMITH BRINGS SUPERMAN TO LIFE—AND DEATH

By Rob Allstetter



KEVIN SMITH (RIGHT, WITH "CHASING AMY" ACTRESS JOEY ADAMS) WILL PEN THE NEW "DEATH OF SUPERMAN" FLICK

Kevin Smith is super-psyched these days. And it's not just because the former convenience store clerk is readying his third film, "Chasing Amy," for release in February or March.

Smith, a devoted comics fan whose previous films were "Clerks" and "Mallrats," has been tabbed to write a new **Superman** movie, which will relaunch the character into live-action form theatrically.

Smith told *Wizard* that his original outline for the film, to be produced by Jon Peters ["Batman"] for Warner Bros., was warmly received by the film company. He is now beginning to work on the full screenplay.

If all goes well, production on the film could begin next year and it could fly into theaters by the summer of 1998.

"Warner Bros. is ecstatic," Smith said. "It's all outlined, it's all road-mapped—now it's just [a matter of] filling in the gaps. They loved it. We have some great, great stuff. Hands down, it has to be one of the most—if not the most—satisfying comic book movie that will ever be presented."

Part of that satisfaction might stem from the fact that Smith's story is derived from the "**Death of Superman**" comic book saga, complete with **Doomsday**. The other part comes from his carrying a great deal of reverence for the source material.

"Not only are we handling the characters the way the characters are handled in the comics, but we're also throwing in tons and tons of small, cool fanboy details," Smith said.

"There's a scene on Thanagar with the Hawkmen. There's my version of the Legion of Doom, using obscure little-knowns you'd never think you'd see in a major motion picture.

"Anytime you can get Deadshot into a movie, I think you're doing well.

"Then, of course, there will be all of the players from 'The Death of' and 'The Reign of' Superman storylines. You have to compact a year of DC in the comics into two hours [of movie]. So, it is kind of compressed. And, yes, it is a bit changed—it's not entirely word-for-word-close to what they've done. But it's very close, and there are certain other things we've weaved in as well.

"Doomsday's in it. **Brainiac**'s in it. **Lex Luthor**'s in it. The **Cyborg Superman**'s in it. **The Eradicator**'s in it. And Superman himself.

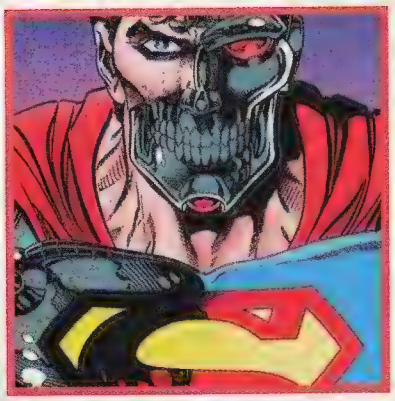
"Remember when [Keith] Giffen took over *Justice League*? The Maxwell Lord Justice League? The little robot, L-Ron? He's in the script."

So how is Smith going to fit all of these characters into *one* film?

"You'll see," he said. "The nice thing about the script is that it's not like 'Batman Forever,' where it feels so full of people that nobody's given character development. There are some people in and out of the script—it's like pffffft. It's not like we don't give enough time to Superman. Thankfully, since it is the death of Superman, you don't have to worry about the dual identity—there's not much of Clark going on."

Smith said he figures today's movie-making magic is up to the level of the elements involved in his story.

"Oh, absolutely, especially now, with places



SMITH'S SCREENPLAY PROMISES TONS OF GUEST STARS. (FROM TOP): CYBORG SUPES, ERADICATOR, BRAINIAC AND DOOMSDAY

like Digital Domain," he said. "You can definitely pull this stuff off. It's a heavily CGI [computer-generated images] movie.

"One thing I definitely look forward to seeing is the new version of Superman flying. The **Chris Reeve** flying scenes [from the previous Superman films] still stand up today, which is nice, but they could definitely be better, and they are going to be."

Budget was not a concern when Smith put together his outline.

"The budget range they are talking about I feel real comfy in, so I [can] just let it go and write it however I want," he said. "I'm not going to be the one that drives up the budget, thank God. They've gotten to the point of what they are going to spend, and I thought, 'Shoot, you've got more than enough for this business.' "

With the recent comic/TV wedding of Lois and Clark and the two television series, Warner Bros. has targeted Superman as its next big franchise, and Smith acknowledges the considerable attention focused on the new film.

"When I first started the outline of this project, I got that pre-release poster for the original 'Superman' movie, with that 'You will believe a man can fly' on it," Smith said.

"And it's so much history and responsibility that gets placed in your hands. My God, this is one of the most popular characters of the 20th century. Most recognized. Most well-known. So much history going on for 60 years. Don't screw it up."

Smith has also completed a script for a **"Six Million Dollar Man"** movie at Universal. He is talking to Matt Wagner about his **Grendel** and **Mage** properties and told *Wizard* he thinks DC's **The Question** would make a great movie.

Smith has approximately 10 weeks to complete his Superman screenplay. He anticipates a couple of polishes after that, and even more refinement during shooting because it's an action film.

"It's a great gig. I'm happy," Smith enthused. "I never imagined three years ago or four years ago working in a convenience store that I'd be doing Superman. But, at the same time, I see this as a bridge to something even cooler: Now I'm going to use this hopefully to write a comic book at DC. I want to take the reigns of a title over there, which is funny because most people take the opposite approach. They write something else to try to get into movies.

"I'm just trying to get into comics, man."

INSIDE "BATMAN AND ROBIN"

The television magazine program "Inside Edition" presented what it called "an exclusive first look" at the upcoming **"Batman and Robin"** film on Oct. 15. The nearly four-minute piece showed George Clooney and Chris O'Donnell on the set in their new costumes.

Clooney's looked like the traditional Batman movie costume, except there is no yellow around the encircled logo. Clooney, the star of television's "ER" who is replacing Val Kilmer as the Dark Knight, inserted a plastic guard under his mask and over his nose to relieve the pressure from the mask and help him breathe.

O'Donnell's Robin costume looked more like Nightwing's, mostly black with a splash of orange/red. His mask was more bat-shaped than in "Batman Forever." And, as in the previous film, costumes for both Batman and Robin have nipples.

Also shown were Uma Thurman as an academic-looking Pamela Isley (Poison Ivy's alter ego) and Elle Macpherson as Bruce Wayne's girlfriend.

Sources told *Wizard* that Jeep Swanson, a professional wrestler, will be playing the role of **Bane**, Poison Ivy's bodyguard in the film.

COLUMBUS SETS COURSE FOR FF

Chris Columbus has committed to directing a big-budget **"The Fantastic Four"** movie from 20th Century Fox. Columbus, whose credits include "Home Alone," "Mrs. Doubtfire" and "Nine Months," will begin pre-production on "Fantastic Four" before year's end. He is fine-tuning a script by Mike France ("Cliffhanger," "GoldenEye").

Sources told *Wizard* that the villain will be **Doctor Doom** and that **Jim Lee** might be involved in some of the design work, but both of these possibilities have yet to be confirmed. "The Fantastic Four" is tentatively targeted for a summer 1998 release.

This will actually be the second FF film produced. The first "Fantastic Four" was produced in late 1992 by Roger Corman's Concorde Pictures, basically so that Contantin Film's Bernd Eichinger could retain the film rights to the popular characters.

That low-budget movie, which starred Alex Hyde-White, Rebecca Staab, Jay Underwood and Michael Bailey Smith, was shelved just two weeks before its scheduled world premiere in Minneapolis. It has remained unreleased, although bootleg copies have circulated at comic conventions. The film's theme music is now used as part of the "Roger Corman Presents" series on Showtime.

In other Marvel news, the 10th episode of the first season of **"The Incredible Hulk"** animated series is called "And the Wind Cries...Wendigo." The story has the Hulk and General Ross handcuffed and trying to save Betty from the creature Wendigo in the Pacific Northwest. The episode was written by Meg McLaughlin, who has also written for **"Spider-Man."** Also, the live-action **"Captain America"** is slated to be Marvel Studios' first movie project.

SCUD, RAZOR ON THE WAY

Alan McElroy, writer of the upcoming **"Spawn"** movie from New Line Cinema and a writer and co-executive producer of the upcoming "Spawn" animated series on HBO, has completed a first draft for Cinergi on a **"Scud, the Disposable Assassin"** movie.

"I'm doing a rewrite now," McElroy told *Wizard*. "They were very happy with the first draft and are serious about getting some top talent for this."

McElroy and producer Jeff Most ("**The Crow**" and "The Crow: City of Angels") are pitching a movie based on London Night Studios' ***Razor***. "Studios are scared to death of female-driven action material," McElroy said. "They think it doesn't sell. But Everette Hartsoe [of London Night] is chewing lead to see this movie get made, and I don't see how it cannot be made."

McElroy is also helping develop a television pilot for Paramount based on the *Terror T.R.A.X.* video game. "It's about a paranormal attack squad," McElroy said. "It's as if you took '**X-Files**' to the next level."

ALAN McELROY USES HIS "SPAWN" CLOUT ON "SCUD" (ABOVE) AND "RAZOR"

TOO MUCH COFFEE, ANY-ONE?

InVision Entertainment, a Los Angeles-based animation studio, has acquired the television and film rights to **"Too Much Coffee Man,"** the comic series created by Shannon Wheeler and published by Adhesive Comics.

"Too Much Coffee Man is much like The Tick, which also started out as a self-published black-and-white book and has a unique appeal to adults," said Michael Hack, executive vice president at InVision. "In a way, TMCM is a superhero, albeit a hapless one, just because he's getting through life in the '90s. That's part of the appeal; you can personally relate to what Too Much Coffee Man goes through, but he says and does what we're afraid to say or do."

"TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN: THE MOVIE" ?

A SUPER SLUMP?

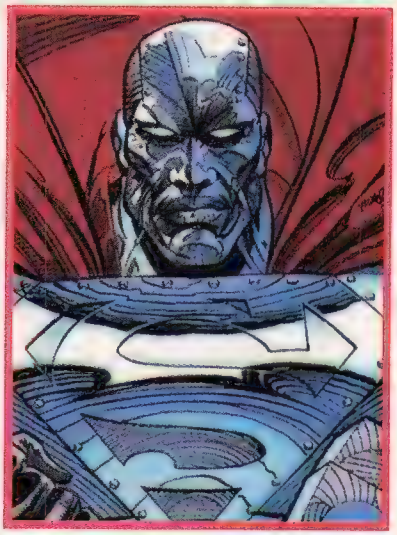
ABC's **"Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman"** seems to be in a bit of a ratings slump to start its fourth season. The first three episodes of "Lois & Clark" this season were beaten by both NBC's "3rd Rock from the Sun" and CBS' "Touched by an Angel."

Even the ballyhooed wedding episode on Oct. 6 was beaten soundly in the ratings.

According to Nielsen figures, "3rd Rock from the Sun" drew 18.4 million viewers to 17.8 for "Touched by an Angel" and 14.9 for "Lois & Clark." That figure was the best this season for "Lois & Clark" and placed the show at 28th for the week.

Both "3rd Rock" and "Touched by an Angel" are shows that were brought into the 8 p.m. (ET) time slot, replacing the rescheduled "Mad About You" and the canceled "Murder, She Wrote," respectively, both of which "Lois & Clark" fared well against last season. More competition is expected in that period on Nov. 3 when Fox broadcasts its season premiere of "The Simpsons."

Speculation on the next big Superstory angle centers around a baby for Lois and Clark.



"STEEL" IS A DONE DEAL...AND AIMS FOR A SEQUEL

STEEL WRAPS

Ten weeks of principal photography on the **"Steel"** live-action movie concluded on Oct. 13. The Warner Bros. film stars Los Angeles Lakers center **Shaquille O'Neal** as the DC Comics hero, is written and directed by Kenneth Johnson and is expected in theaters next summer.

According to *Daily Variety*, the budget on "Steel" is $23 million, and there will be 29 weeks of post-production for special effects. O'Neal, who is also executive producer on the film, reportedly received just $200,000 for the role, a far cry from his $123 million contract with the Lakers.

Daily Variety also reported that "Steel" co-stars Annabeth Gish and Richard Roundtree have already agreed to do a sequel.

HBO AIMS FOR ADULTS WITH "SPAWN," "SPICY CITY"

Todd McFarlane's **"Spawn"** and Ralph Bakshi's **"Spicy City"** will be the first two series from **HBO**'s newly formed animation division. The original goal of the division is to provide late-night, adult-oriented animated programming for the pay cable network.

Catherine Winder, a producer of MTV's "Aeon Flux," will oversee daily operations of the

animation division. "We are taking a theatrical approach to television production, with an emphasis on originality, quality and detail," Winder said. "We're excited to offer opportunities for artists and creators to push the boundaries of what people have come to expect from an animated television program."

Eric Radomski, a former producer/director for Fox's "Batman," is the division's supervising director. He has also been given a development deal to create and work on original properties.

"Cartoons are not just for kids; they never have been," Radomski told *Wizard*. "It's just another medium to tell a story. It's just as valid to make adult content in animation as any other form."

Both "Spawn" and "Spicy City" will have six episodes targeted for the spring of 1997.

GODZILLA TRIES HIS 23RD HAND AT FILM

LOOK! IT'S GODZILLA!

Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin, the creators of last summer's blockbuster "**Independence Day**," will be writing and directing a new **"Godzilla"** movie for the summer of 1998 from TriStar Pictures.

The film is already in pre-production. Production could begin as early as this spring, and the budget is expected to be near $90 million.

This will be the 23rd Godzilla film since the character first appeared in 1954.

TIMECOP TO TELEVISION

ABC has ordered 13 episodes of a television series based on the **"TimeCop"** film and Dark Horse comic book, writer Mark Verheiden told *Wizard*.

The series will be produced by Universal Television for the 1997-98 season with a reported budget of $1.3 million per episode.

Verheiden, who wrote the film, will write the first episode and serve as supervising producer. Executive producers will be Lawrence Gordon, who produced the film, and Robert Singer, who produces "Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman." Dark Horse president Mike Richardson will be co-executive producer.

Jean-Claude Van Damme, who starred in the movie, will not appear in the series. There was no casting as of press time.

I WANT MY MTV (ANIMATION)

MTV Networks is making a major push in the animation field with the announcement of an investment of more than $420 million into original programming over the next five years for both MTV and **Nickelodeon**.

MTV Networks plans to produce more than 850 half-hour episodes in that time. Both Nickelodeon's Nicktoons Animation in Los Angeles and MTV's New York animation studio will get major expansion.

MTV's most popular characters, **Beavis and Butt-Head**, will be featured in "Beavis and Butt-Head Do America," a theatrical release this December from Paramount Pictures. MTV will soon premiere a "B & B" spinoff, "Daria."

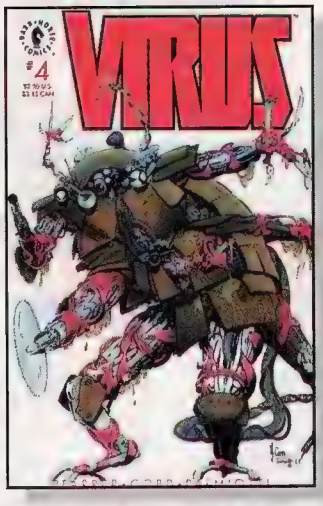
Nickelodeon is producing a "Rugrats" movie based on the television series. Its upcoming TV projects include "Hey Arnold!" and "Angry Beavers."

The company continues to work with independent animation studio Klasky Csupo. As part of a new, multi-year agreement, Klasky Csupo's projects will include 29 new "Rugrats" episodes, 13 more episodes of "AAAHH!!! Real Monsters," a pilot for a new series entitled "Elmo & Kiwi" and the "Rugrats" feature film.

"Animation has long been a critical component of our identity," said Judy McGrath, president of MTV. "From network ID's to series to short films, we've taken an approach that has turned the genre on its head. We look forward to developing new ideas and talent in the animation world."

SHORT TAKES

Production has resumed on the **"Batman"** animated series, which moves to Kids' WB next fall. Producer Paul Dini told *Wizard* there will be 21 new episodes. **Mark Evanier** will be among the writers contributing....."Sabrina, The Teenage Witch," a live-action series based on the Archie Comics characters, is one of the hits of the new television season. The series premiere of "Sabrina" on Sept. 27 was the most-watched network show of that night. ABC has put in an order for a full season of 22 episodes of "Sabrina" and has moved the show from 8:30 to 9 p.m. (ET) on Fridays....Production on the **"Virus"** live-action movie, based on the Dark Horse series, has been pushed back until Jan. 24. A few script problems are being flushed out, and producers decided to wait for better shooting conditions on the East Coast....Writers **Marv Wolfman** (*New Teen Titans*) and Craig Miller (a marketing consultant in the movie industry) have formed **Wolfmill Entertainment**, which will develop live-action and animated shows aimed at children and young adults. Planned projects include the non-violent fantasy program "Pocket Dragon Adventures" (which debuts internationally in 1997),



"VIRUS" IS PLAGUED BY SCRIPT WOES

and adaptations of the comic series *A Man Called A•X* (a Wolfman book originally published by Malibu and becoming a new DC series next year) and *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*....**Terry Zwigoff**, director of "Crumb," and *Eightball* creator **Dan Clowes** are working on a screenplay for a movie based on the "Ghost World" storyline that was serialized in *Eightball*. According to Fantagraphics, "Ghost World" will be Zwigoff's next film....Peter Bagge's **Girly-Girl** character is in development as an animated series with Broadway Video....**Kids' WB** recently shifted its Saturday morning lineup, effective Oct. 19. The new lineup includes "Freakazoid!" at 8 a.m. (ET), "Earthworm Jim" at 8:30, "Superman" at 9, "Road Rovers" at 9:30, "Waynehead" at 10, "Pinky & The Brain" at 10:30, "Animaniacs" at 11 and "The Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries" at 11:30....**Talisa Soto**, who starred in the "Vampirella" telefilm for Showtime, will be appearing in New Line's "Mortal Kombat" sequel, **"Mortal Kombat Annihilation."** The cast also includes Robin Shue (who returns as Liu Kang), Brian Thompson, Sandra Hess, Irina Pantaeva and Lynn Williams. The film began production in late October in Wales....A **"Tommi Gunn"** movie, based on the London Night Studios character, is in pre-production for the Showtime cable network. **Heather Elizabeth Parkhurst**, star of the Showtime series "Sherman Oaks" and a former member of the Swedish Bikini Team, will play the cyborg Tommi Gunn....**Woody Allen** will be the featured voice talent in the tentatively titled "Ants," a computer-animated film from DreamWorks and Pacific Data Images....The brothers of the **Blues Brothers** will be doing the voices for the animated "Blues Brothers" series for UPN. Peter Aykroyd and James Belushi will do the voices of Elwood and Jake Blues, characters originally portrayed by Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi. W

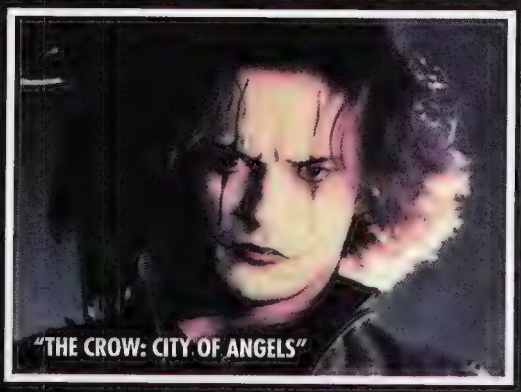
Rob Allstetter is pleading with Kevin Smith to include Black Vulcan and Giganta in the "Superman" movie.

TRAILER PARK

1996: NOT MUCH TO CROW ABOUT

"BARB WIRE"

"GENERATION X" TELEFILM


"THE CROW: CITY OF ANGELS"

The bombs of 1996 have failed to deter Hollywood from its explosive fascination of comic book characters.

"Barb Wire," "The Phantom" and "The Crow: City of Angels" were all substantially less successful than expected at the box office. But, by the end of the year, three more comics-based films went into production, and you don't have to be on a studio's board to figure "Batman and Robin" will do better than "Barb Wire."

Of course, it won't take much to outdo *any* of the past year's films. Gramercy's "Barb Wire," released on May 3, got a lot of pre-release ink with star Pamela Lee, but viewers stayed away at the box office—and later from the video store. Paramount's "The Phantom," starring Billy Zane and Kristy Swanson, was released June 9 to decent reviews, but the $40 million movie fell short of a $20 million intake. And, finally, Mirimax's "The Crow: City of Angels" opened to nearly $10 million and a Labor Day box-office record, but quickly disappeared after bad reviews.

"It didn't help that the films weren't very good," noted one studio source. If the early excitement about them is any indication, the closest thing to successful comic book movies this year will probably be two sci-fi films with comic connections: November's "Star Trek: First Contact" and December's "Mars Attacks!"

Really, the biggest comics movie news of 1996 was the casting roller coaster for "Batman and Robin," the fourth movie in the franchise that everyone is trying to emulate.

Warner Bros. lost Val Kilmer, but picked up Emmy nominee George Clooney of "ER" in the cape and cowl. The all-star cast, which seemingly made news every week, also includes Arnold Schwarzenegger as Mr. Freeze, Uma Thurman as Poison Ivy, Chris O'Donnell as Robin and Alicia Silverstone (not Liv Tyler, as rumored mid-year) as Batgirl.

The buzz on "Batman and Robin" has already started, in anticipation of its June release and showdown with "The Lost World," the sequel to "Jurassic Park."

Two other major comics-based films completed principal photography in the last quarter of '96. Shaquille O'Neal of the Los Angeles Lakers fills the big, armor-plated shoes of DC's "Steel" for Warner Bros., and New Line is preparing an effects-heavy "Spawn" film—starring Michael Jai White—for an August 1997 release.

Warner Bros. is also moving forward on relaunching a Superman film series, hiring Kevin Smith to write a movie incorporating many elements of the "Death of Superman" comic book story.

Marvel—which was again quiet on the film front in 1996—finally figures to enter the fray, even forming its own Marvel Studios. New Line's "Blade," starring Wesley Snipes as the vampire hunter, is scheduled to begin production under the direction of Steve Norrington in February, Chris Columbus has agreed to direct "The Fantastic Four" for 20th Century Fox and sources tell *Wizard* the Big M is very close to announcing several big-budget films.

Literally dozens of comic characters, ranging from Scud the Disposable Assassin to Black Cross to Zen: Intergalactic Ninja, have been optioned for films and are in various stages of development.

"These things can take a long time," said Extreme Studios' Rob Liefeld, who has several projects on the burner.

Comic characters continue to flourish on the small screen, especially in animation.

Marvel signed a multi-year agreement with Fox, which continued to score solid ratings with "Spider-Man" and "X-Men" and figures to bring "Silver Surfer" to Saturday mornings next. "The Incredible Hulk" was off to a strong ratings start for the United Paramount Network on Sunday mornings.

"The Tick" remained a staple in Fox's lineup and also aired on Comedy Central. Ben Edlund's character is headed for the big screen, too.

A new "Superman" series graced the Kids' WB lineup after premiering with a 90-minute, prime-time movie. Production resumed on "Batman," with 21 more episodes planned. A straight-to-video animated "Batman" film is also planned to coincide with the release of "Batman and Robin."

Image characters are being animated in venues other than the traditional networks. Erik Larsen's "The Savage Dragon" began its second season on the USA Network with a better look. HBO has a daring, adult "Spawn" series scheduled for late Friday nights this spring.

In the live-action world, ABC's "Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman" is beginning to struggle in the ratings in its fourth season despite the marriage of its main characters. A "Generation X" syndicated series, based on Fox's February telefilm, is planned by New World for next fall. A "Vampirella" movie aired in October as part of the "Roger Corman Presents" series on Showtime, with the potential of more to come.

So the frantic chase to bring superheroes to the screen has not finished. In fact, it has only just begun. ■ *RA*

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ANGRY RED PRIZES

Grand Prize (1): One reader whose reason and photo is best will receive a two-issue *Mars Attacks!: The Official Movie Adaptation* series autographed by *Mars Attacks!* co-creator Len Brown, a *Mars Attacks!* (second series) eight-issue set, *Mars Attacks! Baseball Special* and *Mars Attacks!/The Savage Dragon* #1 autographed by various creators and a box of *Mars Attacks!* Topps Widevision trading cards! Whew!

Second Prize (10): Ten readers whose rationale is still pretty good will each receive a two-issue *Mars Attacks!: The Official Movie Adaptation* series autographed by Len Brown, an autographed *Mars Attacks!/The Savage Dragon* #1 and a box of those wacky *Mars Attacks!* Topps Widevision trading cards.

The Legalese

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Topps Comics and their immediate families or the thunbomber, who's blown up quite enough things, thank you very much. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card and attach to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "Let's Blow it Up!" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Klaatu nikto bravo. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by January 31, 1997.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on quality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Judging will take place on February 17, 1997. Mars Attacks is a registered trademark of The Topps Company, Inc.

For a list of winners, available after February 17, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "Let's Blow it Up!" Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

This contest is sponsored by Topps Comics. We think they're actually from the red planet.

TOPPS WIDEVISION™

Topps TRADING CARDS

Topps COMICS

Fill this sucker out, put it in an envelope and send it to: "Let's Blow it Up!" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is January 31, 1997. So get yer KABOOMS out!

Let's Blow it Up! Entry Form

DEADLINE IS JANUARY 31, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Did you attach your photo? Huh? Didja?

Basic Training

HOW I DO SOUND EFFECTS

IN THEIR BEST INCARNATIONS, SOUND EFFECTS ARE ACTUALLY A VISUALIZATION OF THE SOUNDS WITHIN THE SCENE YOU'RE READING.
SO WHERE DO SOUND EFFECTS COME FROM?
POP! POP! POP!
THEY REALLY DERIVE FROM TWO SOURCES... CALLIGRAPHY, OR HAND LETTERING...
...AND TYPOGRAPHY, THE PRINTER'S ART...
...AND THEY CAN CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR STORY IN VERY DIFFERENT WAYS.
BOOMBOOMBOOM
PUMMEL PUMMEL
BANG CLAW!
SOME ARTISTS LIKE VAUGHN BODE WENT NUTS WITH 'EM.
IN HIS STORIES, HIS SOUND EFFECTS OFTEN RIVALED HIS PICTURES FOR VISUAL IMPORTANCE.
© Vaughn Bode
LISTEN
ON ONE OF WILL EISNER'S SPIRIT PAGES, THE EFFECTS BECAME THE PICTURE!
© Will Eisner
BONG
GONG
GONG
GONG
VA VA VOOM
DANG A LANG
WHEN WALLY WOOD WORKED FOR MAD MAGAZINE BACK IN THE '50'S, HE DID A STORY WHERE EVERY WORD WAS A SOUND EFFECT!
© E.C. Publications
BOUM!
AND AS YOU'D EXPECT, FOREIGN COMICS HAVE FOREIGN SOUND EFFECTS...
AS YOU CAN SEE, THAT'S AN EXPLOSION IN FRENCH!

I'M INTERESTED IN TYPOGRAPHY AND CALLIGRAPHY AND I BRING BOTH THESE ELEMENTS TO MY WORK...

...USING THEM TO SHAPE THE LETTERING I DESIGN.

OLD STUFF

LET ME GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE.

IN THIS CAPTAIN FEAR JOB, A STORY OF PIRACY ON THE HIGH SEAS DONE FOR DC, I DELIBERATELY CHOSE A CASLON TYPEFACE.

IT'S AN OLD-FASHIONED FACE WITH A SLIGHTLY MOTH-EATEN LOOK I THOUGHT WOULD EMPHASIZE THE ANTIQUITY OF THE TALE...

...SORT OF LIKE THE BROADSHEETS OF THE 18TH CENTURY.

TH-BOOM!

© DC Comics Inc.

I ONCE USED THE WORD "DOOM" AS A SOUND EFFECT, A PICTORIAL ELEMENT, A NARRATIVE DEVICE, AND THE TITLE FOR THE STORY...

...ALL IN THE SAME PICTURE IN THE MIGHTY THOR!

LUCKY FOR ME WORDS DON'T DEMAND OVER-TIME.

DOOM!

© Marvel Characters Inc.

AND IN A RECENT STAR SLAMMERS STORY FOR DARK HORSE PRESENTS, I ADDED A DOUBLE OUTLINE AROUND THE TITLE, BOTH TO EM-BOLDEN THE WORDS...

...AND TO SUGGEST THE FEVER DREAM/HALLUCINOGENIC QUALITY OF THE STORY SUGGESTED BY THE TITLE ITSELF*.

Fever Dream

*OKAY, SO A TITLE ISN'T STRICTLY A SOUND EFFECT. SO SUE ME. ACTUALLY, JOHN WORKMAN SHOULD SUE ME. HE'S THE GUY WHO DOES MOST OF MY LETTERING THESE DAYS. IT WAS HIS TITLE.

© Walter Simonson

BUT LET'S GET DOWN TO THE NUTS AND BOLTS.

HERE'S A PICTURE OF A TYRANNOSAURUS REX. PRETTY COOL, HUH?

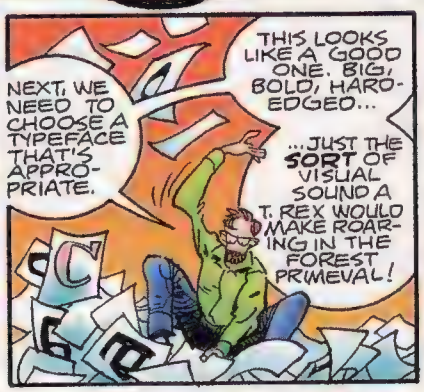
EXCEPT THAT ANYTHING THAT **BIG** IS GONNA MAKE A **LOT** OF NOISE AND RIGHT NOW, I DON'T HEAR A **THING.**

SO LET'S DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT.

FIRST THINGS FIRST. WHAT SORT OF SOUND WOULD IT MAKE?

SEEMS OBVIOUS. SOMETHING **LOUD, BIG,** AND **BOLD!**

I'D SAY A "**ROARRR RRRRR!**" SEEMS ABOUT RIGHT.

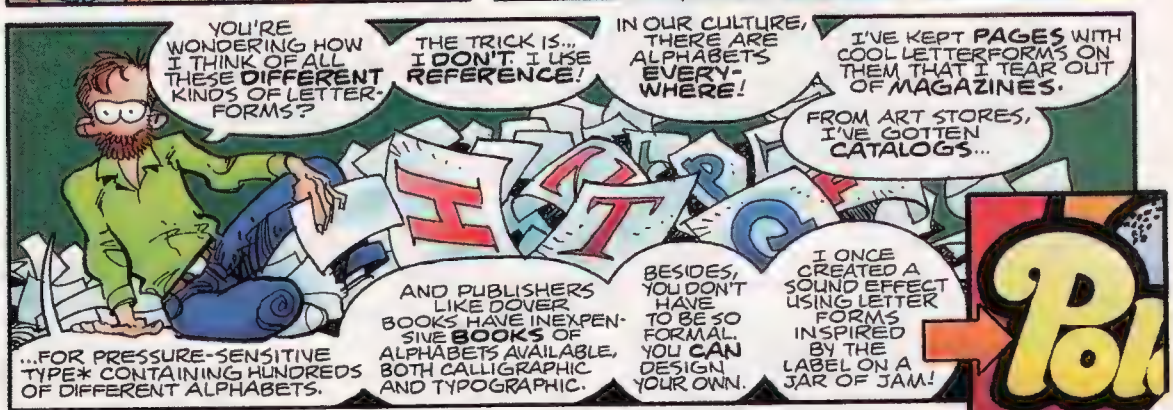


NEXT, WE NEED TO CHOOSE A TYPEFACE THAT'S APPROPRIATE.

THIS LOOKS LIKE A GOOD ONE. BIG, BOLD, HARD-EDGED...

...JUST THE **SORT** OF VISUAL SOUND A T. REX WOULD MAKE ROARING IN THE FOREST PRIMEVAL!

THEN WE... WHAT'S **THAT?**



YOU'RE WONDERING HOW I THINK OF ALL THESE **DIFFERENT** KINDS OF LETTERFORMS?

THE TRICK IS... I **DON'T.** I USE **REFERENCE!**

IN OUR CULTURE, THERE ARE ALPHABETS **EVERYWHERE!**

I'VE KEPT **PAGES** WITH COOL LETTERFORMS ON THEM THAT I TEAR OUT OF **MAGAZINES.**

FROM ART STORES, I'VE GOTTEN **CATALOGS**...

...FOR PRESSURE-SENSITIVE TYPE* CONTAINING HUNDREDS OF DIFFERENT ALPHABETS.

AND PUBLISHERS LIKE DOVER BOOKS HAVE INEXPENSIVE **BOOKS** OF ALPHABETS AVAILABLE, BOTH CALLIGRAPHIC AND TYPOGRAPHIC.

BESIDES, YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SO FORMAL. YOU **CAN** DESIGN YOUR OWN.

I ONCE CREATED A SOUND EFFECT USING LETTER FORMS INSPIRED BY THE LABEL ON A JAR OF JAM!

Pok

*THESE ARE THIN PLASTIC SHEETS PRINTED WITH RUB-OFF LETTERS THAT CAN BE APPLIED TO ARTWORK.

COOL LETTERFORMS ARE OUT THERE ALL **OVER** THE PLACE, JUST WAITING FOR YOU TO FIND THEM.

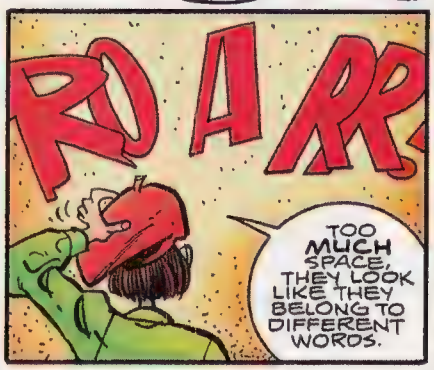
NOW START BY DRAWING A RECTANGLE THE SIZE AND LOCATION OF THE SOUND EFFECT YOU WANT ON YOUR PICTURE.

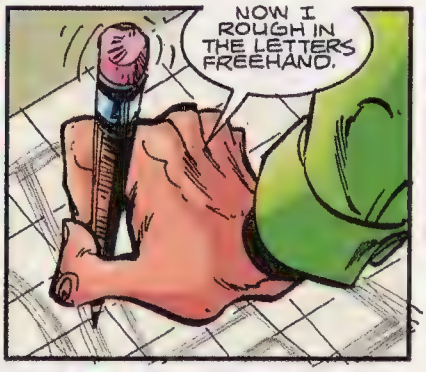
THAT LOOKS PRETTY GOOD. BIG AND BOLD. AND WE'LL PUT IT ON AN ANGLE TO GIVE IT **EMPHASIS!**

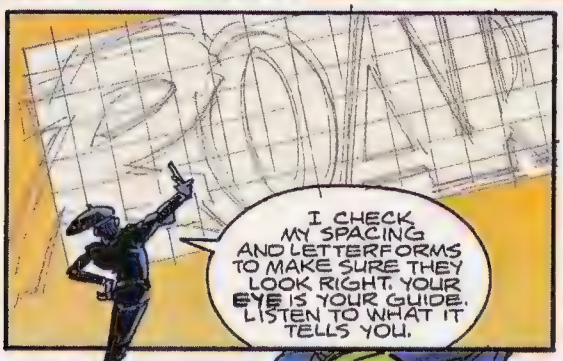
I USUALLY ADD A GRID TO GIVE ME GUIDANCE, BOTH FOR THE VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL OUTLINES OF THE LETTER-FORMS...

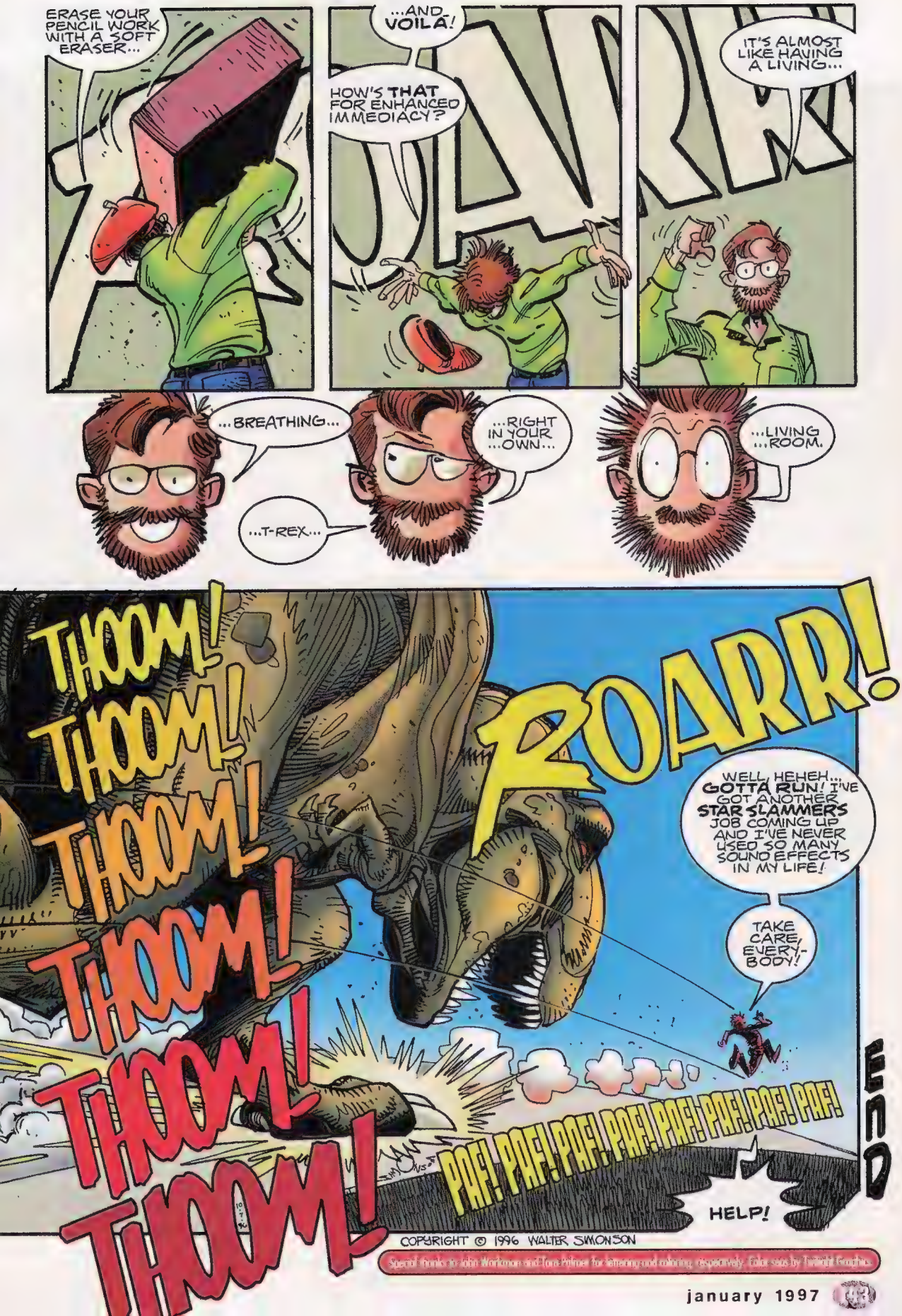
...AND FOR HELPING ME SPACE THE LETTERS CORRECTLY.

KEEP IN MIND THAT THE SPACE YOU LEAVE **BETWEEN** THE LETTERS IS AS IMPORTANT TO THE WAY THE WHOLE WORD LOOKS AS THE FORMS OF THE LETTERS ARE THEMSELVES.








ERASE YOUR PENCIL WORK WITH A SOFT ERASER...
...AND VOILÀ!
HOW'S THAT FOR ENHANCED IMMEDIACY?
IT'S ALMOST LIKE HAVING A LIVING...
...BREATHING...
...RIGHT IN YOUR ...OWN...
...T-REX...
...LIVING ...ROOM.
THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM! THOOM!
ROARR!
WELL, HEHEH... GOTTA RUN! I'VE GOT ANOTHER STAR SLAMMERS JOB COMING UP AND I'VE NEVER USED SO MANY SOUND EFFECTS IN MY LIFE!
TAKE CARE, EVERY-BODY!
PAF! PAF! PAF! PAF! PAF! PAF! PAF! PAF!
HELP!
END
COPYRIGHT © 1996 WALTER SIMONSON
Special thanks to John Workman and Tom Palmer for lettering and coloring, respectively. Color seps by Twilight Graphics.

Crack the Safe with Catwoman Contest

How To Play

It's Catwoman's job to crack safes. But it looks like she could use a little help. Wanna lend a hand? Somewhere in this very issue of *Wizard* is a door with the first of three numbers in the combination to this safe. Where's the door with the number? You'll have to find it yourself, but we'll give you a hint: Look for something in CATWOMAN purple. Find this issue's number, combine it with the other two purple numbers found on doors in *Catwoman* #42 (on sale December 1996) and #43 (on sale January 1997) and you could win some great prizes like:

Grand Prize (1):

One randomly selected reader who cracks the safe by getting the combination right will win this autographed piece of Jim Balent original Catwoman art, the actual original script from *Catwoman* #43 signed by writer Doug Moench, a Balent-signed copy of the *Catwoman: The Catfile* trade paperback, a Catwoman T-shirt, a Catwoman poster, a year's subscription to *Catwoman* and Catwoman's gloves! That's a prize package that'll make anyone purr!

Second Prize (15): Fifteen other lucky safecrackers will each get a Balent-signed copy of the *Catwoman: The Catfile* trade paperback, the Catwoman T-shirt and the Catwoman poster!

This month's contest is sponsored by DC Comics, a catty bunch.

Fill this out, put it an envelope and send to: Crack the Safe With Catwoman Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is January 31, 1997.

Furry Legal Text

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, DC Comics and their immediate families or Eartha Kitt and Julie Newmar. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, telephone number with area code and safe combination on the official entry form, a standard postcard or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Crack the Safe With Catwoman Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. By the way, Kathy Newman knows the combination and she says she ain't tellin'. But we know she can be bought. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by January 31, 1997.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected by random drawing from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on February 17, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after February 17, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Crack the Safe With Catwoman Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Crack the Safe Entry Form

DEADLINE IS JANUARY 31, 1997

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Combination: *Wizard* _____ *Catwoman* #42 _____ *Catwoman* #43 _____

JUNK DRAWER

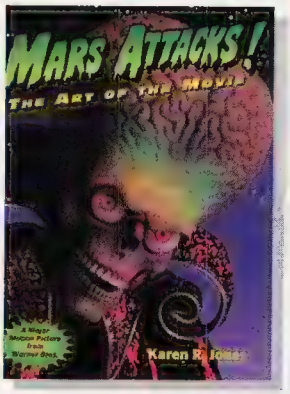
Little bits of everything in the world of comic-related merchandise

by David Borak and the *Wizard* Staff

LOOK FOR THE 'HALLMARK' ON THE BACK!

Looking for the perfect gift this holiday season? Send a Hallmark! No, not a greeting card, but one of seven new DC superhero figurines produced by Hallmark Cards. These original, hand-painted figures feature Superman, Wonder Woman, and Batman and Robin from a variety of time periods. The showpiece of the collection is the 12-inch Golden Age Superman figurine, inspired by an actual 1938 comic book cover. The Man of Steel goes for $80 and is limited to 14,500 pieces. Other figurines include: Modern Era Superman ($60), Golden Age Batman and Robin ($70), Modern Era Batman ($55), Modern Era Robin ($40), Modern Era Wonder Woman ($35) and Golden Age Wonder Woman ($35). Each figurine includes a logo/circa date plaque in the base, a background scene and a storytelling insert giving historic information on the character. Each new figure is available now at Hallmark Gold Crown Stores. Call 1-800-HALLMARK for the store nearest you.

Hallmark's Golden Age Batman & Robin



ART ATTACKS!

Fans of Tim Burton's big screen adaptation of "Mars Attacks!" should check out the new *Mars Attacks! The Art of the Movie* book from Del Rey/Ballantine. This 176-page full-color art book shows readers all of the bizarre art forms that went into making the Tim Burton alien-invasion extravaganza, including Burton's original sketches, blueprints for sets and special effects, models, costume designs and storyboards. *Mars Attacks!* publicist Karen R. Jones chronicled everything from actual filming through completion at George Lucas' ILM, with interviews of nearly all the creative folks behind the film. Look for this one at comic retailers and bookstores everywhere for $20.

HANGING WITH SPIDEY

Available exclusively at all FAO Schwarz stores, look for the four-inch Spider-Man hanging collectible featuring everyone's favorite wall-crawler in a traditional pose. This intricately detailed cast-porcelain model comes hand-painted and numbered, and even hangs from his own webline. Limited quantities are currently available from the original 5,000 piece run, with a $32 suggested retail price tag. To order by mail, just call FAO Schwarz at 1-800-441-7441.

FAO Schwarz's Hanging Spider-Man

JOKER'S WILDSTORM

How about sittin' down for a game of Blackjack with Lynch and Grifter? Or perhaps a little Strip Poker with Fairchild? (Mwrrowww!) 52 Pick-Up with Warblade? Now you *can*, with WildStorm Playing Cards. Currently available, these nifty new cards come in a standard 52-card deck (including two Jokers) starring all of WildStorm's characters from *Gen13* to *WildC.A.T.s* and more, with art from the whole WildStorm crew, including Jim Lee and J. Scott Campbell. Each deck has a suggested retail of $9.95, which you can win back if you play your cards right.

Also available from WildStorm are all-new *WildStorm Stickers*. Packaged just like trading cards, these babies feature 90 individually die-cut stickers of WildStorm's hottest characters. Drawn by some of the hottest artists in comics, such as Jim Lee, J. Scott Campbell, Travis Charest and Whilce Portacio, WildStorm stickers also include logos and classic word balloons. Pick up a pack for just $1.50 (eight stickers per pack, 36 packs to a box).

WildStorm Playing Cards

DREAMTIME

For those of you who were big fans of the Death watches that DC/Vertigo released a few years ago, keep an eye out for the all-new Sandman Watch Set. But wait...weren't there

Sandman Watch by Jon J. Muth

two Sandmans...uh...Sandmen by the end of that great *Sandman* series, you ask? Well, Vertigo has solved that dilemma by providing *two* watches packaged in the set, featuring both incarnations of the Dream King: Morpheus and his successor, Daniel. The first watch features art by Jon J. Muth and displays Morpheus encircled by ravens, while the second timepiece showcases a contemplative Daniel with art by Michael Zulli. Both watches come packaged in a tin box, limited to 2,000 sets, with a suggested retail of $79.95.

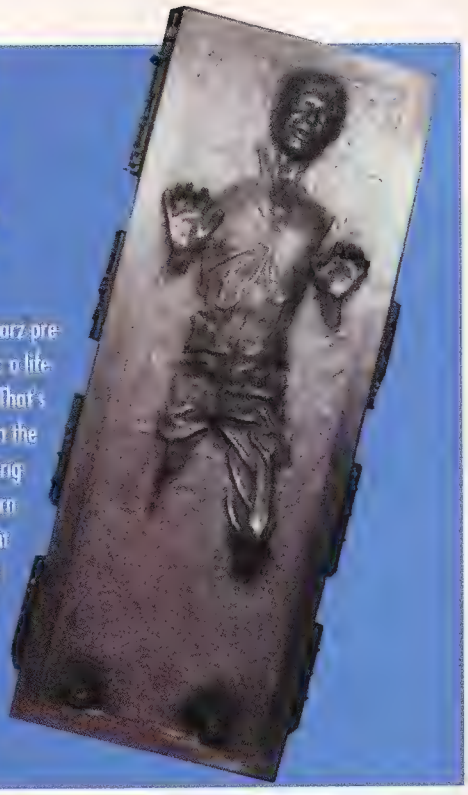
MUTANT PROSE

So ya gotta do a book report and can't use a comic, eh? Then check out the "Mutant Empire Trilogy," a series of novels featuring everyone's favorite mutants, the X-Men! The trilogy follows the adventures of Marvel's mutants as they attempt to thwart Magneto's plot to take over the world. Each book in the trilogy is written by Christopher Golden, with chapter-head illustrations by comic artists like Rick Leonardi, Ron Lim and Terry Austin. The first book, *Siege*, introduces the story as Magneto takes over Manhattan and the X-Men are forced to stop him. The second book in the series, *Sanctuary*, continues the epic adventure, guest-starring Corsair and the Starjammers! Look for the third book, *Salvation*, in the spring. Each "Mutant Empire Trilogy" book retails for $5.99 and can be found at bookstores everywhere.

Product of the Month

MAY THE SCHWARZ BE WITH YOU

For people with some BIG money to spend, FAO Schwarz presents this wooey cool piece of Star Wars memorabilia: a life-size reproduction of Han Solo Frozen in Carbonite! That's right, this 6 1/2' x 2 1/2' x 1' replica is forged from the same mold and fiberglass material used to make the original prop seen in "The Empire Strikes Back" and "Return of the Jedi." Plus, this frozen Han Solo replica is light enough to hang on a wall (as Jabba the Hutt can tell you), due to its fiberglass construction. So get rid of those neon lights and road signs and make room! Han's available exclusively at FAO Schwarz stores for a mere $1,350. For ordering instructions, just call 1-800-441-7441.



PAGING ALL SUPER-HEROES

Tired of looking at the same old drab beeper every time your wife pages you to pick up groceries on the way home from work? Well, thanks to Marvel Comics and Ricton, the vibrating setting won't be the only thing that makes you smile about your beeper! You can now look for licensed beeper casings portraying all your favorite Marvel characters. Each plastic molded case features one of eight Marvel heavyweights screened onto the surface, including: Spider-Man, Wolverine, Captain America, The Hulk, Beast, Punisher, Silver Surfer and Ghost Rider! They're all available at cellular phone stores and major paging wholesalers and retailers nationwide for just $12.95 each.

CAFFEINE HANG-UPS?

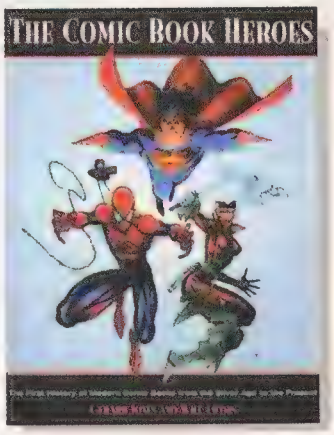
Treat yourself and some of your java-addicted friends to a jolt of

Too Much Coffee Man Magnet

Shannon Wheeler's *Too Much Coffee Man* with this cool new magnet set based on the addicting comic book series. Three magnets are included in the set featuring TMCM himself lounging in a cup of you-know-what, as well as a cuppa joe atop a skull and the Too Much Coffee Man logo. The set, available now from Graphitti Designs, retails for $6.95.

A COMIC BOOK BOOK

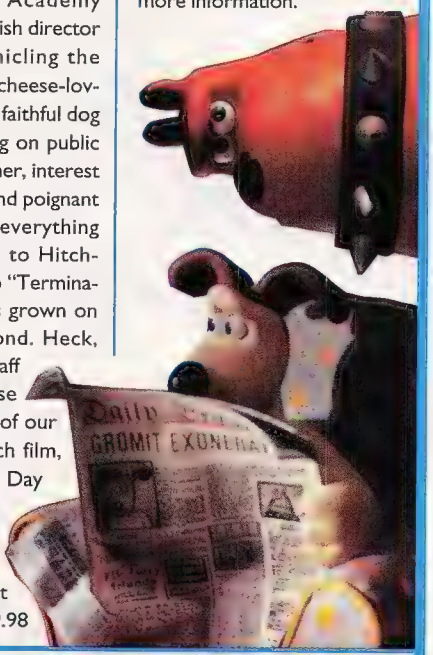
Prima Publishing dusts off *The Comic Book Heroes*, a retrospective of the entire comic book industry written by comics pros Gerard Jones and Will Jacobs in 1985 (*before* they entered the industry!) in an all-new updated volume. For any comic book aficionado, from new readers to hardcore fans, *The Comic Book Heroes* provides an expansive look at the four-color world in this substantially revised and updated 416-page edition, which includes 120 illustrations and also marks Jones' (*Green Lantern, Green Lantern: Mosaic*) swan-song from the industry. *The Comic Book Heroes* retails for $19.95 in trade paperback and is available at bookstores everywhere with an all-new Travis Charest cover!



Wallace and Gromit

CLAY IN MOTION

Attention Wallace and Gromit fans! The Wallace and Gromit Gift Pack collects all three clay-mation films by Academy Award-winning British director Nick Park, chronicling the adventures of the cheese-loving Wallace and his faithful dog Gromit. Since airing on public television last summer, interest in Park's hilarious and poignant films—which mix everything from clay puppets to Hitchcockian suspense to "Terminator" homages—has grown on this side of the pond. Heck, when the *Wizard* staff previewed "A Close Shave," we fell out of our chairs laughing! Each film, including "A Grand Day Out," "The Wrong Trousers" and "A Close Shave" are available in most video stores for $9.98 each. The Gift Pack with all three videos retails for $24.98. You can also visit the Wallace and Gromit website at *http://www.aardman.com* for more information.



If you're hankering to add any of these funky-fine products to your personal collections this holiday season, just write to Santa or ask your local comic retailer to special order 'em for ya!

HEY! Are you a company producing some really nifty comic-related merchandise like Poison Ivy mistletoe, Egghead eggnog or Mr. Freeze snow blowers? If so, we'd love to include 'em in our groovy "Junk Drawer" section. (Of course, we'd also like sculptures, novels, T-shirts, games, magnets, buttons, etc.) Please send all info and samples to:

Junk Drawer
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920

JUNK DRAWER video games

by Steve Brown

Video Game Dreams Do Come True... Nintendo 64 Arrives!

Thanks to the generous folks at Nintendo, *Wizard* got the chance to test pilot its new 64-bit juggernaut, the Nintendo 64. As of this writing, only two games were available at launch: *Super Mario 64* and *PilotWings 64*. And we're happy to report that both games live up to—and even surpass—the reams of hype that N64 has already generated.

Despite a somewhat hefty $199.99 retail price tag, all of the initial Nintendo 64 units sold out in about 24 hours of hitting store shelves. But by the time you read this, there should be enough hardware units out there and hopefully a slew of new games available. The N64 is a superior machine and an excellent improvement over the Sony PlayStation and Sega Saturn, but it does have its flaws: very high cartridge prices (not counting the first two lower-priced games, most cartridges will cost you $70-$100 per game), as well as limited third-party development (read: less games). However, the advantages are even more substantial when compared to the 32-bit CD-ROM-based systems: N64 has *no* loading time (which means no waiting), better graphics and memory capability, and Nintendo's programming house...which is undeniably the best in the biz. So here's a look at what the N64 has to offer:

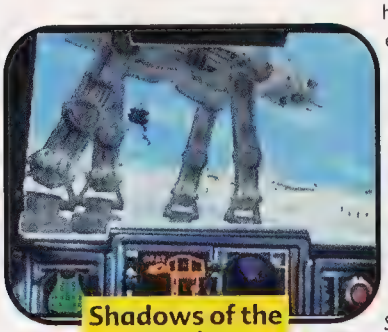
SUPER MARIO 64

Super Mario 64 is the best of the pair of initial Nintendo 64 offerings, and probably the greatest video game ever created. At first technically and eye-pleasingly perfect, *Super Mario 64* is also one of the deepest and most-complicated vid-adventures ever. Plan on sacrificing a 40-hour work week if you hope to clear this flagship game, which combines the standard-setting play of the older *Super Mario Bros.* with true three-dimensional scenarios. The result is a real-time, computer-graphics interactive

Super Mario 64

Super Mario 64

adventure that raises the bar for all video games to follow. With 25 different areas to explore, spotless graphics and special effects, *and* complete 360-degree movement, *Super Mario 64* is a new standard for all other games.


Shadows of the Empire

PILOTWINGS 64

PilotWings 64 is a thinking man's game, and even more difficult than *Super Mario 64*. A sequel to the SNES *PilotWings*, the new Nintendo 64 version takes you on an airborne tour through the U.S., stopping at famous landmarks like Mount Rushmore and the Statue of Liberty. Players can choose between three different vehicles—a gyrocoptor, a hang-glider and a jet pack—and take 360-degree journeys through 27 different courses, performing such tough maneuvers as pinpoint mountain top landings and flying between the buildings of a major metropolis. The game missions involve photographing obscure targets and even hunting down a killer giant cyborg armed with an air-to-ground missile. After clearing each level, you qualify for bonus stages—one particularly fun stage is the Birdman level, which has no real purpose except allowing you to explore the level to your heart's content without a time limit.

SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE

Hopefully, by the time you read this, the N64 *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire* will be available. In an adventure set between the events of "The Empire Strikes Back" and "Return of the Jedi," *Shadow*'s game-play sets you up as Dash Rendar, friend and protector of Luke Skywalker (Han's frozen in carbonite, remember?), as he overcomes various Imperial obstacles. Programmed with a hectic pace, *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire* looks like a sure bet—which means it'll probably sell a ton of N64s this holiday season.

CAPPING OFF 1996

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter—A *DOOM*-type first-person game starring Valiant Comics' favorite dinosaur-hunting Apache. This one has been in the works for over two years from Acclaim.

WaveRace 64—Nintendo's water-bike racing game featuring single or two-person play.

Cruis'n USA—Nintendo's arcade-driving hit.

Wayne Gretzky Hockey—This fully licensed and fully 3-D offering is one of only two sports games scheduled for release from Williams.

Mortal Kombat Trilogy—Williams' other release is this standard fighting game.

Killer Instinct—Nintendo's year-ender is this fighting game, also standard fare.

1997 AND BEYOND

Goldeneye 007—Following the recent Pierce Brosnan James Bond film, this Rare/Nintendo production appears to be a 3-D gun-fest with 360-degree movement.

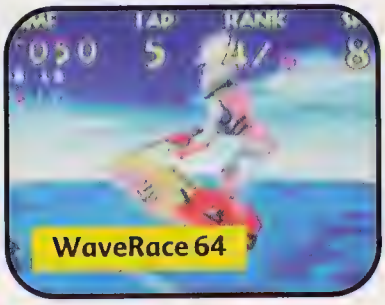
Also, keep an eye out for the following:

Starfox 64, Kirby's Air Ride, Body Harvest, Super Mario Kart R, Tetrisphere, Buggie Boogie, Ken Griffey Jr. Baseball, Blast Corps, DOOM 64, FIFA Soccer, Mission: Impossible, Monster Dunk, Robotech Crystal Dream, Freak Boy, NBA Hangtime, Robotron X, War Gods, Silicon Valley, Ultra Combat, Ultra Descent, F-Zero, Dark Rift, Creator, Super Mario RPG 2, Top Gun 2 and *Yoshi's Island 64*.

As you can see, there are a ton of games in the works, which could make the N64 the last word in video games.

Cruis'n USA

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter


WaveRace 64

PilotWings 64

Goldeneye 007

Event Comics Presents:

The Hang Out With Ash Contest

How to Play

Ashley Quinn, everyone's favorite firefighter, is so cool that we all want to hang out with him. And now you can! Just write in 100 words or less why *you* want to hang out with him and you just might show up in an issue of *Ash* as Ashley's pal!

Very Hot Prizes

Grand Prize (1): One lucky winner who sends us the best entry will get their likeness drawn as a cameo appearance in a future issue of *Ash* and get the original page of art in which they appear! Do you realize how friggin' cool that is? Creators Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti have *never* given away any *Ash* pages previously! This will be the only page out there!

Second Prize (1): One winner whose entry is still pretty darned good will get a complete set of all *Ash* and *Ash: The Fire Within* comics published through November 1996 signed by Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, an *Ash: The Fire Within* "Virgin Edition" (a limited edition of the mini-series containing an original sketch of Ash by Quesada and Palmiotti) and a box of the new Dynamic Forces *Ash* trading cards, plus an uncut sheet from the trading card set! Whew! Thatsa lotta swag!

Third Prize (5): Five other readers will each get an Ash T-shirt, an Ash baseball cap, a Quesada-and-Palmiotti autographed *Ash* trade paperback, a box of *Ash* trading cards and an uncut sheet from the set!

This month's contest is sponsored by Event Comics, and they know hose.

EVENT COMICS™

Fill this sucker out, put it an envelope and send to: Hang Out with Ash Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is January 31, 1997.

Fiery Legal Text

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Event Comics and their immediate families or the Mighty Quinn. Ya ain't seen nothin' like 'im, y'know. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach your entry to the form or card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Hang Out With Ash Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules thereof. Ash good, fire bad! **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by January 31, 1997.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on originality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press and Event Comics. Judging will take place on February 17, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after February 17, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Hang Out With Ash Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Hang Out with Ash Entry Form

DEADLINE IS JAN. 31, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Did you attach your entry?

THE TOY CHEST

KENNER PRE-TOY FAIR PREVIEW!

Those nice toy-makers at Kenner were kind enough to let us in on all their great new toy offerings for 1997. Here's just a few of the new action figures that'll brighten toy shelves next year:

Fans talked and Kenner listened: Harley Quinn and an all-new Joker are on the way!

HARLEY'S HERE!

For fans of Kenner's Adventures of Batman & Robin action figures modeled in that ultra-cool animated series style, take heart—the line is *far* from finished. Listening to collectors' desires, Kenner is set to release one of the most-requested Bat-villains, the Joker's moll Harley Quinn! Based on the character that debuted on the animated "Batman" series, Harley just looks great in her cute li'l jester's costume—but she's just as nasty as the rest of Batman's Rogues Gallery. And to insure she doesn't get lonely on the toy shelves, Kenner will release a fourth animated-style Joker figure, tentatively named Machine Gun Joker, which looks just like the Clown Prince of Crime blasting his way through the opening credits of the late animated series.

While fans are clamoring for more DC Comics characters rendered in the art-deco animated style, it might be noted that both Lobo and the Flash will be appearing in the new animated "Superman," making them possible contenders in the new Superman line. Plus, DC Comics is soon to launch *Adventures in the DC Universe*, a new comic series spotlighting its various characters in an animated style. Can a tie-in action figure line be far behind? If you want it, write Kenner and DC and let 'em know. Hey, it worked for Harley!

BY **SCOTT BEATTY**

DYNAMIC D.U.O. FORCE

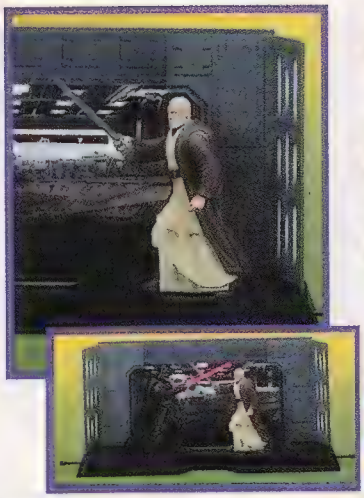
In addition to adding new villains to the existing Adventures of Batman & Robin line, Kenner has adapted the Caped Crusader and his sidekick into D.U.O. Force, figures that come with their own high-tech vehicles which convert from one crime-fighting mode to another—*and* link up to form much larger vehicles when you assemble them all together. Look for the first D.U.O. Force assortment, including Turbo Surge Batman, Air Strike Robin and Vector Wing Batman to debut in 1997 ready for battle against a re-decoed Mr. Freeze with all new accessories!

LEGENDS OVERHAULED

Also getting a facelift is Kenner's Legends of Batman line, which has been revamped *and* re-named Legends of the Dark Knight. Instead of focusing on various "Elseworlds" incarnations of Batman throughout history, Legends of the Dark Knight has opted for one world—a twisted, parallel universe where criminals are in control! To kick off the new line in style, Kenner has scaled the figures to a much larger 6 1/2 inches and given them a darker look befitting a new evil environment. The first assortment includes six figures—two of which are villains! Look for Spline Cape Batman, Dive Claw Robin, Twister Strike Scarecrow, Neural Claw Batman, Lethal Impact Bane and Assault Gauntlet Batman to debut in the new Premium Collector Series. As well, Kenner will offer the Sky Wing Street Bike, which arrives with its own Batman figure, converts into a high-tech air assault vehicle with rapid-deploy wings and features a secret-shot missile launcher.

MERGE WITH THE FORCE

In addition to the late '96/early '97 Star Wars: Power of the Force action figures (which include Greedo and a Jawa two-pack!) *Wizard* spotlighted last issue in "Toy Chest," Kenner is also releasing new electronic figures that sport light and sound. In the new Electronic F/X series, look for separate Darth Vader and Obi-Wan Kenobi figures with glowing LED lightsabers. Each figure comes packaged



Kenner's new Electronic F/X figures, featuring Vader and Kenobi's epic lightsaber duel

with its own connecting base and backdrop that depicts half of the Death Star hangar lightsaber battle from "Star Wars." But link 'em up and you can let 'em have at it with control rods in the base that move the figures. Batteries included. (The Force is extra.)

Also on the horizon is an Electronic F/X R2-D2, which arrives on its own diorama straight from the desert planet Tatooine. R2 features remote action, plus, electronic lights and sounds!

Finally, two all-new vehicles make their way to toy shelves in 1997. First up in Kenner's mid-size Star Wars: POTF vehicle assortment is Luke's T-16 Skyhopper. Based on the vehicle seen only in model form in "Star Wars," the Skyhopper is actually two vehicles in one with a disengaging cockpit. There's also a detachable pivoting blaster cannon and multi-position wings for you to bull's-eye womprats in Beggars' Canyon with, just like young Skywalker did.

In the small vehicle-assortment, Kenner will release the Imperial Cruisemissile Trooper, a never-before-seen vehicle with extendible wings and firing blaster cannons. Pull a hidden lever and you can raise the pilot figure's (not included) head through the viewport. Best take a deep breath, though, ya lousy Imperial goon.

CAPTAIN AMERICA!

Toy Biz wraps up 1996 with three new assortments, one of which features a brand-spankin' new Captain America figure! Yeah, baby! Cap is included in the new Spider-Man: Electro Spark line, all "sparking" action figures with flint-striker mechanisms (much like those nifty kids' ray guns from yesteryear). Included in the assortment are Anti-Electro Spidey, Electro Armor Spidey, Steel Shock

Legends of the Dark Knight: Lethal Impact Bane (above) and Twister Strike Scarecrow (below)

WISH LIST UPDATE

ACTION FIGURES YOU HELPED MAKE!

Since *Wizard* #54 (March 1996), you readers have kept piling in for the Top 10 action figures you'd love to see. And as we go to press with this here Year Ender, we're proud to give you the skinny on all the action figures you helped make! No kidding. The various toy companies tell us that they read "Wish List" so don't think your votes haven't made a difference. Thus, we're proud to give you the following wrap up for 1996.

FIGURES THAT HAVE BEEN PRODUCED

- **Captain America**—Spider-Man: Electro Spark (Toy Biz)—*Wizard* #55
- **Aquaman**—Batman: Total Justice (Kenner)—*Wizard* #55
- **Electro**—Spider-Man: Electro Spark (Toy Biz)—*Wizard* #55
- **Hulk**—The Incredible Hulk (Toy Biz)—*Wizard* #55
- **Captain Christopher Pike**—Classic Star Trek (Playmates)—*Wizard* #55
- **Green Lantern**—Batman: Total Justice (Kenner)—*Wizard* #56
- **Juggernaut** (a good one!)—Light-Up X-Men (Toy Biz)—*Wizard* #56
- **Tusken Raider**—Star Wars: Power of the Force (Kenner)—*Wizard* #56
- **Gorn**—Classic Star Trek (Playmates)—*Wizard* #56
- **Bane** (a good one!)—Legends of the Dark Knight (Kenner)—*Wizard* #59
- **Mystique**—X-Men: Mutant Monsters (Toy Biz)—*Wizard* #60
- **Quicksilver**—X-Men: Mutant Armor (Toy Biz)—*Wizard* #60
- **Daredevil**—Marvel Universe (10-inch figures) (Toy Biz)—*Wizard* #61
- **Elektra**—Light-Up Psylocke re-deco (Toy Biz)—*Wizard* #61
- **Jean Grey**—Marvel Hall of Fame Puzzle Zoo exclusive (Toy Biz)—*Wizard* #62

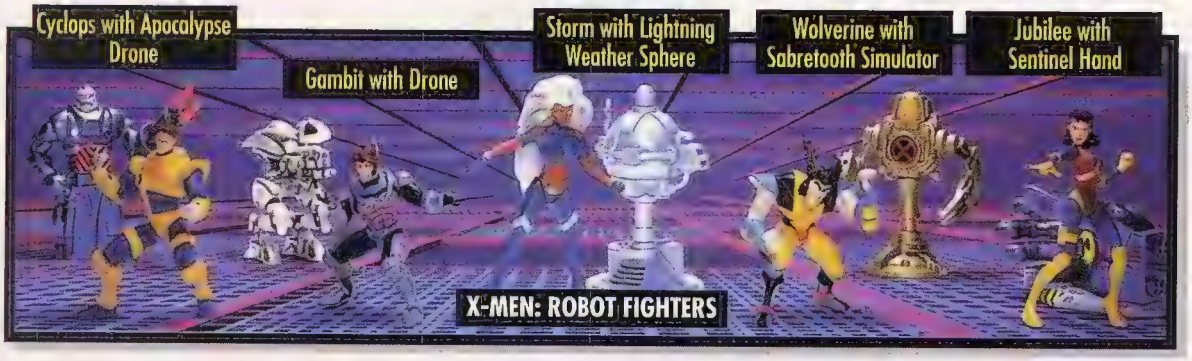
FIGURES THAT ARE RUMORED TO BE IN PRODUCTION

- **Grand Moff Tarkin**—Star Wars: Power of the Force (Kenner)—*Wizard* #55
- **Bizarro**—Superman (Kenner)—*Wizard* #57
- **Azrael**—Batman: Total Justice (Kenner)—*Wizard* #57
- **Parallax**—Batman: Total Justice (Kenner)—*Wizard* #60

Keep sending them Top 10 lists! You've already made a difference! Drop us a note with your "dream figures" at:

c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920

Or e-mail us at:
WizardTGTC@aol.com



Spidey and the villainous Electro—returning to action figuredom after over a decade. The last time fans saw Electro was back in 1984's Secret Wars line from Mattel, and then in European shipments only. Best of all is the new Captain America which comes with a transforming jet that converts into a backpack *and* a cryo-freeze table. (Bucky!) Purists take note: Cap has the "A"...so don't worry about that "Heroes Reborn" hooey ruining your figure like it did the comic.

Also debuting in January is a whole new X-Men action figure assortment: X-Men: Robot Fighters. This time, Toy Biz serves up a few core X-Men characters, each with his own Danger Room robot (complete with working mechanism!). Robot Fighters feature all-new sculpts of the various X-Men, including Jubilee with a Sentinel Hand, Cyclops with an Apocalypse Droid, Storm with a Lightning Weather Sphere, Wolverine with Sabretooth Simulator and Gambit with a Star Wars-esque Drone. Both Robot Fighters and Electro Spark lines illustrate Toy Biz's new commitment to developing a consistent size scale for its lines. The new Wolverine stands at a little over four inches, while Storm towers over the rest of the X-Men (an' you can see her belly-button too!).

Marvel's mutants will also be showing up in an all-new Toy Biz assortment called X-Men: Mutant Monsters (further subtitled: Sinister's Revenge), which includes various

The Big Guns

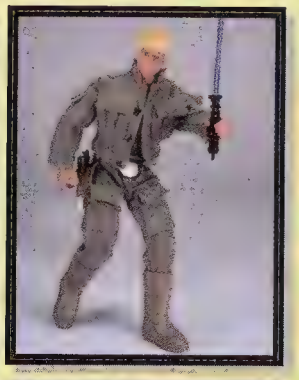
We first reported on these guys back in *Wizard* #62's "Toy Chest." Now say hello to Hasbro New Ventures' latest additions to its 12-inch Star Wars Collector Series, due in 1997:

SERIES II

Lando Calrissian

Chewbacca

Tusken Raider


Luke Skywalker in Bespin Gear

Spawn Series Seven

Check out the latest additions to McFarlane Toys' popular Spawn line:

Scourge

Spawn III

No-Body

Crutch

Zombie Spawn

Sam and Twitch

The Mangler

heroes and villains with snap-on monster mutations of their powers. Cyclops literally becomes a one-eyed monster; Rogue transforms into a leech-bat (don't ask); Wolverine has snap-on features that make him more feral than ever; Mystique, rendered for the first time in five-inch form, becomes a She-Beast (resembling the "Age of Apocalypse" Dark Beast); and an all-new Mr. Sinister comes packaged with snap-on cybertech accessories.

TOY BIZ COLOR CHANGES

Now that Toy Biz's Incredible Hulk figures are finally out on toy shelves, Toy Biz Product Manager Jesse Falcon reports that the entire first series will undergo deco changes for the last 50,000 pieces of each character. The Rampaging Hulk's hair will be redecoed from black to green. The silver and black on the Leader's accessories will reverse. The Abomination, who originally had black shorts and a cape, will have those

HALL OF FAME: THE BEST TOYS OF •1996•

TOP 10 ACTION FIGURES OF 1996

10) Light-Up Psylocke (Toy Biz) A good representation of the character with decent poseability, but what's up with that hair? (Thankfully, Toy Biz has informed us that it's re-sculpting her head with better hair.)

9) Captain America (Toy Biz) Excellent body sculpting and height, but what's with his head/face???

8) Chin-Balancing Tick (Applause/Taco Bell Exclusive) Neat li'l action feature that hardly anyone saw (too bad for them). Great for any desktop, but not much play value.

7) Sonsker (McFarlane Toys) Excellent sculpting and paint job—he looks just like a cool Frank Frazetta monster that Conan should be fightin' for dear life against.

6) Quicksilver (Toy Biz) Another great representation of a character. And thank God he's actually thin and not super huff.

5) Han Solo in Stormtrooper (Kenner/Fred Loops Exclusive) Put that helmet on him and he blends in perfectly with other Stormtroopers. But why no blaster???

4) Jawa Two-Pack (Kenner) Two words: two sizes. *And* two guns. That's too much!

3) "Age of Apocalypse" Magneto (Toy Biz) Best Maggie yet... with *great* accessories. Just too bad it wasn't the real Magneto.

2) Light-Up Gambit (Toy Biz) Cool depiction of character, with great movement and jacket material—but not as detailed as our #1 figure, though...

1) Boba Fett (Kenner) The best action figure representation because of the sheer amount of detail put into it. Fett could be a little more poseable, but just look at that paint job!

BEST TOY LINE OF 1996

Star Wars (Kenner) For sheer detail and variety of characters and accessories, Star Wars captures new fans *and* lets a lot of us older toy collectors reminisce.

THE FIGURE YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER SEE IN 1996...BUT DID!

Dr. Strange (Toy Biz) Okay, so now howzabout Wong and Dormammu?

BEST SCULPTED FIGURE OF 1996

Sonsker (McFarlane Toys) From the articulated soak segments to the moving jaw, the Spawn having vampire takes the cake.

BEST ACTION FEATURE

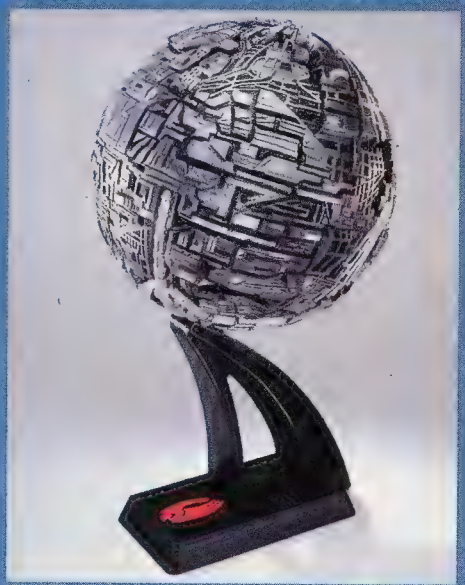
Godzilla "Monster Roars" (Trendmasters) With voice chips recorded straight from the original Japanese Zilla films, this action feature brought new life to the classic monster.

WIZARD'S "DREAM LINE" OF 1997

Kingdom Come There wasn't a comic book series in 1996 more deserving of an action figure line than this future-tense look at DC Comics icons.

Playmates Joins Forces with The Borg

Here's a look at Playmates' new Borg ship from "Star Trek: First Contact"—and you're seeing it in "Toy Chest" first! No more Rubik's cubes for these assimilating cyborg nasties. The new Borg ship, currently available, includes a pop-off panel with detailed battle damage, a Borg display base, and electronic lights and sounds from the movie. It retails for just $24.99.



items changed to purple. As well, Abomination's gun will change from purple to red. Got that?

Probably the biggest news for collectors centers on the Biz's She-Hulk action figure. Shulkie's re-deco involves serving her up in her Fantastic Four costume (from the classic John Byrne years), which should appeal to fans of the late, lamented Fantastic Four line.

Over in X-Men territory, in the current X-Men: Battle Brigade line-up, the following re-decos will take place: Colossus' costume will change from his early X-Men days to his Acolyte costume; "Age of Apocalypse" Beast will pick up the classic blue-and-yellow X-Men colors (and be kinder an' gentler); Archangel's costume will be re-decoed from blue to red; and finally, Lady Deathstrike and Patch Wolverine will each have subtle changes to set their final runs apart from initial offerings.

Fans of Marvel's resident super-speedster Quicksilver will want to note that after his initial classic costume release, his final 50,000-piece run will involve a deco change to his current costume.

MARVEL UNIVERSE

Finally, Toy Biz is repackaging its 10-inch figures in the new Marvel Universe format, offering re-decos of existing figures, as well as figures not available in the five-inch format (like the "flameless" Johnny Storm or the 10-inch Mystique). The best news is that Marvel Universe will kick-off with a brand-new Daredevil figure. DD is coming at ya in his classic dark red-and-yellow costume, though that doesn't rule out the possibility of having Matt Murdock scaled down and re-decoed in the all-red suit *a la* Frank Miller's glory days on *Daredevil*...hmm... **W**

Staffer Scott Beatty, who toured Astro City this issue, is known to readers of Wizard's *Brazilian edition as "Bobo." ¡Que ridículo!*

ToyFare

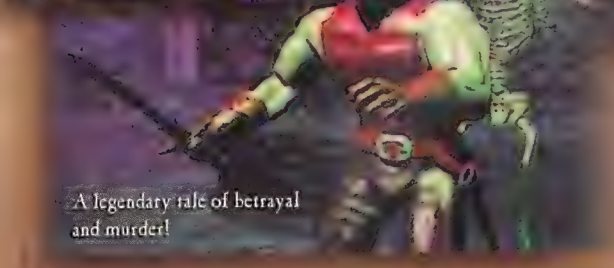
Molten Man comes to life in this exclusive Toy Biz/Wizard offer. Limited to 7,500 pieces, it will never be made available anywhere else...ever! The only way to get him is through the Wizard ToyFare Special. Full of the latest toy industry news, it's the mag no fan can go without! There, enough of the sales pitch. Go buy one.

ON SALE NOW

CHRONICLES OF THE SWORD

TO SERVE KING ARTHUR. TO BATTLE EVIL. TO RISK ALL FOR THE HONOR OF CAMELOT.

Uphold the virtues of the Kingdom.



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Journey across Camelot and beyond.

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HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

GRAND PRIZE

ROGUE
Michael McKinney of Lindsay, Calif.
Rock on! Made from a mannequin, Rogue would make an ideal window display at Sears, don't ya think? Heh. Wish this mannequin could come to life like Kim Cattrall in that movie.

All of the following figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures and household materials, and each of these supertalented creators will receive two 5-inch Toy Biz Marvel action figures. The Runner-Up will also get a 10-inch Toy Biz Marvel action figure, and the Grand Prize Winner takes home all that stuff plus a Toy Biz Marvel model kit. Outstanding work, people!

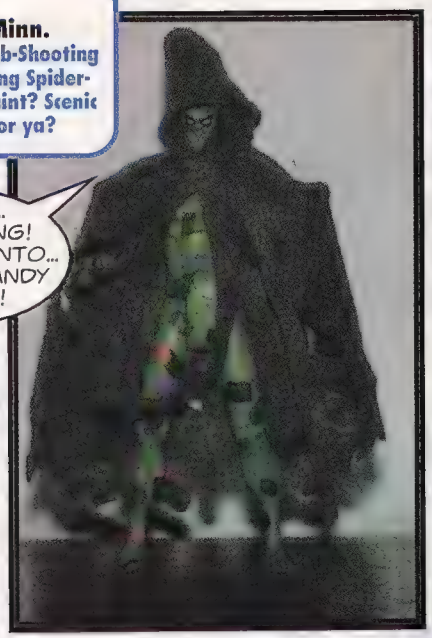
Thanks to the folks from Toy Biz for their generous donation of prizes. You guys are the speakers on our boom box!

TOY BIZ™

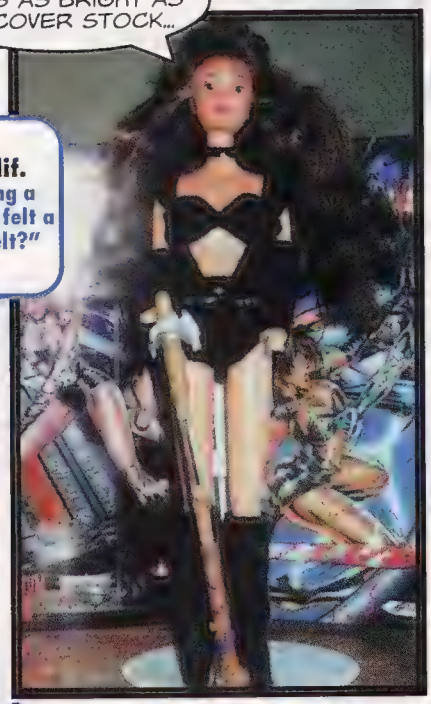
RUNNER-UP

DAWN
Adam W. Leibig of Allen, Texas
This beautiful Dawn is a repainted Toy Biz Phoenix. As for her sword, even we Wizards can't figure out where it came from.

RAGMAN
Jeremy Zoss of Plymouth, Minn.
What was the body made from? A Web-Shooting Spider-Man. The head? A Web-Shooting Spider-Man. The cloak? Felt. What kind of paint? Scenic Model Paint. That good enough for ya?



IMPULSE
James Cornette of Pennsville, N.J.
Using the Bob figure from Irwin's Reboot toy line, this Impulse seems to be tearing up the roadway.



AVENGELYNE
Jeff & Rachael Tucker of Buena Park, Calif.
Standing tall, this Avengelyne was created using a Disney Belle doll and a whole lot of felt. Bet she felt a lot better being a Disney character. (Get it? "Felt?" Aw, the heck with you.)

SLAPSTICK
Thomas Lotz of Naples, Fla.
One word: waaaaacky! Excellent paint job on this crazy character. We went as looney as this Slapstick looks when we first saw it. In fact, we went so crazy that we can't seem to decipher what it was made from. Great job!

HEY!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!), along with your name, address, description of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Press
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

a look at some cool stuff with an alternative twist

Pretty Good Year

Some of the best comics in 1996 came from indy ink

Despite all the craziness and upheaval in the comics industry in 1996, some of the most vibrant, memorable and exciting comics of the year came from creators who choose to work outside of the mainstream—the small presses and independent publishers.

Most of the year's news involved artists who emulated Jeff Smith (who moved *Bone* to Image Comics late in '95) and took their work to larger venues. A long list of self-publishers found refuge at larger companies, including Terry Moore, Colleen Doran, Teri Sue Wood, Drew Hayes, Martin Wagner and Budd Root. Also, Caliber Comics' much-publicized Tapestry imprint was hailed as an all-ages line of comics, but it also served as a lifeboat for former self-publishers like Scott Roberts (*Patty Cake*), Jamie Gownley (*Shades of Gray*), Steve Stegelin (*Boondoggle*) and Rob Bihun (*The Hoon*).

Also in 1996, a handful of alternative stalwarts brought new projects to bigger audiences, while still maintaining strong ties to their indy roots. *THB* creator and publisher Paul Pope got a high-profile shot at the lead feature in *Dark Horse Presents* with his story "The One Trick Rip Off." Terry LaBan, whose *Cud Comics* settled in at Dark Horse, found work at DC's Vertigo imprint as writer of both the lead-off story in *The Dreaming* and the creator-owned espionage thriller *The Unseen Hand*. Vertigo also published *The System*, the initial offering from the Vertigo Verité line, which showcased the unmistakable spray paint and stencil art of longtime alternative creator Peter Kuper. The larger circulations and higher production values of mainstream companies allowed these artists to realize new aspects of their work that the small press could not capitalize upon.

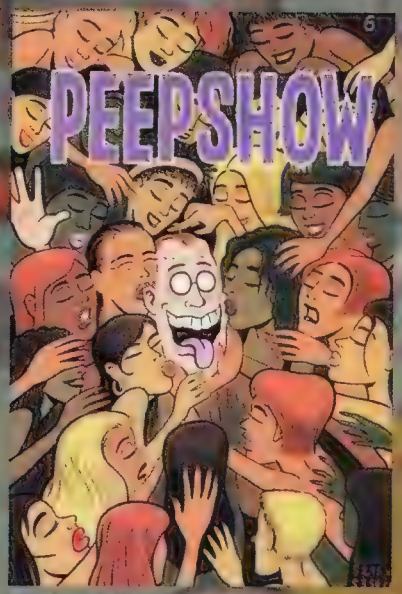
As a result of this shuffling of companies and general nuttiness, more comics readers were able to find and purchase comics by creators who were once considered to be marginal...or too weird for mainstream consumption. Let's face it: Not many fans these days care who publishes a comic, as long as it's exciting, fun to read and accessible. In the past year, there were more well-crafted comics on the stands than ever before. Series like *TUG & buster*, *Scud the Disposable Assassin*, *Kane* and *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac* found a wealth of new readers, all from good word of mouth and favorable press. Even idiosyncratic titles like *Acme Novelty Library*, *Eightball*, *Fleener* and *The Sands* saw interest from readers who wanted to try something new.

Oddly enough, a few comics gained exposure simply because they were ending. One of the most memorable comic books to call it quits this year was Los Bros Hernandez' *Love & Rockets*. Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez decided to end their long-running influential black-and-white comic collaboration to work on new individual projects. Happily, '96 saw an increased amount of work from the pair. Aside from the spectacular 50th issue, Gilbert came out with *Girl Crazy* and *New Love*, and Jaime rendered the beautiful and well-received *Whoa, Nellie!* This past spring also saw the conclusion of Vertigo's groundbreaking *Sandman*, a series that spearheaded the current wave of non-mainstream comics at the big publishers. Also, two long-running and oft-delayed comics drew to satisfying conclusions: Dave McKean's personal *Cages*, and Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's extensively researched Jack the Ripper epic, *From Hell*.

The spaces left by these series will likely be filled with comics by the new generation of creators making their way through the ranks. Female cartoonists like Megan Kelso (*Girlhero*), Jessica Abel (*Artbabe*) and Ariel Bordeaux (*Deep Girl*) are all poised to break out in a big way. Vocal self-publishers like James Kochalka (*James Kochalka Superstar*), Steven Gilbert (*I Had a Dream*) and Joe Chiappetta (*Silly Daddy*) are intent on getting their comics out there, no matter what it takes, including being more vocal about self-publishing, as well as some negotiating their own distribution deals with bookstores like Borders or Barnes & Noble. And a few promising young artists, like Jason Lutes (*Berlin*) and Jon Lewis (*Ghost Ship*), have committed themselves to demanding projects. A number of fully realized young talents like Steve Weissman (*Yikes!*) and Andi Watson (*Skeleton Key*) have even popped up virtually out of nowhere.

Unfortunately, the fate of these new cartoonists, as well as many established ones, rests on you. It's very important to be vocal about the books you want to buy and the series you want to read; otherwise there's a good chance they won't be around very long. Most fans don't realize the power they exercise when they choose to buy, or not buy, a comic book. And even if you do buy a lot of small press books, there are other ways to make yourself heard. Take a few minutes to write some postcards to a few cartoonists. Even a short note is a measure of encouragement to somebody who works in isolation with little or no feedback.

If you keep buying good comics, they'll keep making them. And here's a quick look at a bunch of the cool comics that will be fighting for your wallet's attention in 1997.



Joe Matt's *Peep Show* will be collected in the all-new *The Poor Bastard* in '97

by tom palmer jr.

above: Jaime Hernandez' *Maggie and Hopey Color Special* from Fantagraphics; below: Bill Willingham's *Coventry* joins the Fantagraphics lineup in 1997; in center: Peter Bagge's *Hate*

The Crow Waking from Kitchen Sink Press

Drawn & Quarterly Productions

Nowhere—Cartoonist Debbie Drechsler's two-color regular series features an ongoing serial about a young girl trying to fit in after moving to a new neighborhood.

No Love Lost—Small press sensation Ariel Bordeaux makes the jump from her mini-comic *Deep Girl* to full-size comics with this self-contained story about a bored and somewhat unromantic couple.

The Envelope Manufacturer—Drawn & Quarterly publisher Chris Oliveros pens this three-issue story about an envelope manufacturer struggling against mounting debts.

The Poor Bastard—This long-awaited collection of Joe Matt's autobiographical *Peep Show* series will finally appear early in the new year.

Fantagraphics Books

Fantagraphics plans to bolster its line in '97 with two recent additions, Bill Willingham's *Coventry* and Jim Woodring's *Frank*, as well as the following:

Maggie & Hopey Color Special—Jaime Hernandez' most popular *Love & Rockets* characters are featured in this January one-shot, which will be followed by the regular series, *Penny Century*.

Artbabe—1996 Xeric Grant winner Jessica Abel brings her popular small press comic to Fantagraphics with issue #6. This is definitely one to watch.

Steve Ditko's Strange Avenging Tales—In possibly the weirdest news, Fantagraphics has announced that it is the new publisher of Spider-Man co-creator Steve Ditko. Look for this series to debut in January, featuring some truly whacked-out cartooning.

On the graphic novel front, Fantagraphics plans to release a mammoth, full-color coffee-table hardcover collecting the surreal paintings of legendary underground artist Robert Williams. Also be on the lookout for a new *Holy Cross* graphic novel, *The Moon Looked Down and Laughed* by Mai Coney and Paul J. Holden, a Wally Wood retrospective and a best of *Arcade* collection assembled by original editors Art Spiegelman and Bill Griffith.

Kitchen Sink Press

The Crow—Following the success of *Dead Time* and *Flesh & Blood*, expect to see more Crow stories in '97. Three mini-series are planned, but most of the creative teams and titles are still top-secret. Also be ready for some graphic novel collections of the various *Crow* mini-series from '96.

The Spirit: The New Adventures—Some of comics' biggest names have assembled to pay tribute to Will Eisner's legendary crime-fighter. This four-issue full-color series will debut this summer with work from Alan Moore, Neil Gaiman, Geof Darrow, Kurt Busiek, Adam Hughes, Eddie Campbell, Mike Allred, Bill Stout, Mark Schultz, Dave Stevens and Jim Lee.

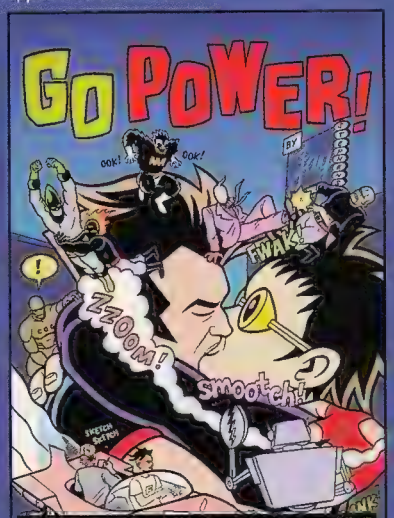
Xenozoic Tales—Details are sketchy at this point, but Mark Schultz has invited other creators to play around with his characters in stories that take place before his popular series began.

Scott McCloud's *Zot!* returns from Kitchen Sink in 1997

Go Power—The early years of Jay Stephens' popular *Atomic City Tales* will be collected at the beginning of '97. Look for the regular series to continue, with a new storyline. Also on the graphic novel front, Kitchen Sink's collections of Scott McCloud's *Zot!* will appear quarterly.

Slave Labor Graphics/Amaze Ink

Mister Blank—Newcomer Chris Hicks makes a big splash in January with this cartoony, *film noir*-ish detective comic from Amaze Ink that should appeal to a broad audience.



Go Power from Kitchen Sink reprints Jay Stephens' early *Atomic City Tales*

Lust for Life—*No Hope* and *Destroy All Comics* creator Jeff Levine returns in February with this new series, which promises some observations on everyday life that are different from those in his earlier works.

Able—Artist Mark Bloodworth and writer William Harms come together for this "Fargo"-esque period piece set in WWII Nebraska, slated for release in March.

Waiting Place—Sean McKeever creates this high school drama, beginning in April, that should appeal to fans of *Strangers in Paradise*.

The Yearning—Sacramento artist Dean Chiang's 96-page wordless story will be released as a graphic novel that should prove to be an interesting read.

If Tom Palmer Jr. was a beer, he'd be a Milwaukee's Best.

WIZARD®

The Guide to Comics

1996 FAN AWARDS BALLOT (EXPLANATION)

They're better choices than Clinton, Dole or even that short guy with the ears!

IT'S TIME TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED! EXERCISE YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE!

You thought the elections were over. You thought it was safe to come out again. But a new election is upon us—the election for the 1996 *Wizard* Fan Awards! And this time, you get to vote without hearing any drawn-out speeches, lame-o debates or attack ads.

That's good. But the best part of all this is that you, yes you, the comic fans of the world, get to determine who and what is the best of the best! Your votes will determine the winners of these prestigious awards! Nominees are already provided for you on the attached ballot, as determined through an America Online poll. Don't like the nominees? Feel free to write in your own.

We encourage you to vote, but remember to follow these important rules and regulations:

1] Any material from calendar year 1996 (comics, TV shows, whatever) is eligible.

2] You may vote for only one entry in any category. Multiple votes are all disqualified.

3] You don't have to vote for a listed nominee. Write-in candidates are perfectly acceptable.

4] You may send in only one ballot. All multiple ballots are disqualified.

5] Get you ballot in by January 20, 1997. Ballots postmarked after that date are null and void.

6] Send your ballot to:

Wizard Fan Awards
c/o Wizard Press
P.O. Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

7] You can photocopy your ballot if a friend wants to vote.

8] Keep reading *Wizard: The Guide to Comics* to see the results in spring of 1997!

EXAMPLE. IT'S LIKE THIS, YA MORT. JUST CHECK ONE ENTRY PER CATAGORY OR CHECK "WRITE-IN" AND WRITE SOMEONE IN. SO SIMPLE, EVEN BRIAN CUNNINGHAM COULD DO IT.

FAVORITE WRITER

- ❑ Kurt Busiek
- ❑ Peter David
- ❑ Garth Ennis
- ❑ Scott Lobdell
- ☑ Mark Waid
- ❑ write-in _____

NOTE: WE JUST THREW DARTS AT THIS SHEET UNTIL WE HIT MARK WAID'S NAME. HE'S A NICE GUY, BUT IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE ENDORSING HIM OR ANYTHING.

Send your ballots to:

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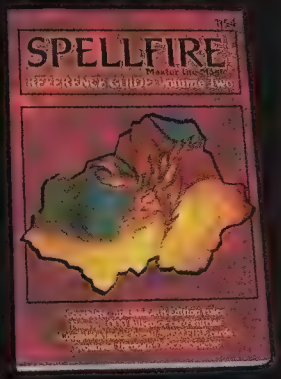

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THE SKINNY

Comic book REVIEWS from the *Wizard* Editors

THE SCORING

6 THE BEST | 5 EXCELLENT | 4 GOOD | 3 SO-SO | 2 UGH | 1 CRAPOLA

SPAWN

Despite a strong cast and powerful art, this book has its weak spots

Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Image
Regular Creative Team: Todd McFarlane, Greg Capullo and Danny Miki
Price/Frequency: $1.95/Monthly

The Good: Let's get this out of the way up front: No, *Spawn* is not exactly *Sandman*, but it is still an entertaining read.

Each page is filled with power. Greg Capullo has actually blended his style with that of Todd McFarlane's and created something even better; his use of spooky silhouette is excellent as are his quiet and comedic moments. The use of intense computer coloring techniques are not only appropriate, but sometimes extraordinary (check out the car crash scene in *Spawn* #49, or how the computer screen lights the dark room on page 12 of *Spawn* #48).

An example of the strong emotions in Spawn, as Spawn debates whether to save his former best friend who is now married to his ex-wife

And McFarlane has certainly matured as a writer since his *Spider-Man* days. *Spawn* presents an imaginative and creative concept of Batman-as-Satan's-unwilling-helper, given to you with a particularly strong supporting cast of normal people with trying human problems. The climax of the cancer storyline involving Terry and Wanda Fitzgerald in *Spawn* #50 is very moving.

Because *Spawn* is a somewhat detached character (see "The Bad"), you never really know where the story is going to end up, making this series extremely unpredictable.

And finally, *Spawn* makes the important effort to be accessible to new readers with its "what's happened so far" blurbs at the beginning of each book.

The Bad: The supporting cast is almost too strong, where you know the characters much better than you know Spawn himself. When Spawn surprises you with a plot twist, it makes you realize that you really don't know him that well as a supporting character, thus it's very difficult to sympathize with him.

There are also too many back stories that slow the main story down. We just want to see closure on some them: How can main bad guy Jason Wynn be around for 54 issues and Spawn hasn't dealt with him already?

The flow and direction of the book need to be ironed out. The pacing is inconsistent—sometimes it's slow, and other times a storyline emerges that's over so quickly, it ends up being anti-climactic (like the recent anticipated return to Hell).

There are times where the art's panel progression isn't easily followed, and there's sometimes far more text and dialogue than is required (no one wants to wade through giant blocks of text like page 1 of Spawn #48 or #52). It makes you notice when the writing is trying to be cosmically dramatic, but falls short.

The Buzz: "Spawn" cartoon, "Spawn" movie, Spawn toys, new Spawn comic titles, Spawn shoelaces…the character could be the next licensing hit, which only serves to bring attention to the comic.

The Skinny: Despite a great premise and excellent characters with outstanding visuals, this book has to shake off the kinks that are making it so unfocused.

The Verdict: 4

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

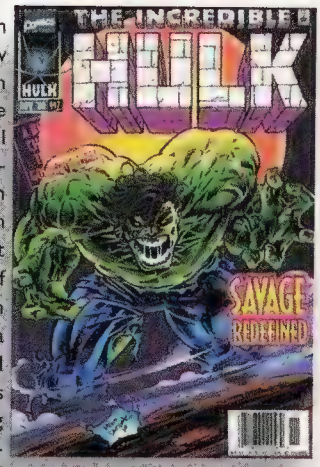
This book is smashed by its hulking problems

Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Marvel
Regular creative team: Peter David, Mike Deodato Jr. and Tom Wegrzyn
Price/Frequency: $1.50/Monthly

The Good: There are usually a lot of interesting emotional conflicts in Hulk that sometimes make you think. The reader is made to choose whether the Hulk-obsessed Major Talbot is right, prompting the question, "Do the ends truly justify the means, especially when trying to capture the Hulk?" You empathize with a woman who's abused by her husband in issue #443. And look at the Molecule Man—he has the power of a god, but in issue #442 he can't deal with the fact that his girlfriend left him. Humanity like that is needed in any book.

The Bad: This series currently begs the question, "Who is the Hulk?" He has lately gone through more personality and appearance makeovers than Michael Jackson. In issue #440, Hulk's grown a beard (in less than a day, no less) with no explanation (is it to tease readers into believing he's turned into the Maestro, a future maniacal version of himself?) and then he "dies" in a nuclear explosion, which you'd expect would give the book a new direction. He returns, however, three issues later and it's status quo. Then, in #447 we're treated to yet another "new" Hulk with a new personality and no memory of who he is. (Add to the mix the "Heroes Reborn" Hulk, and you've got even more confusion.)

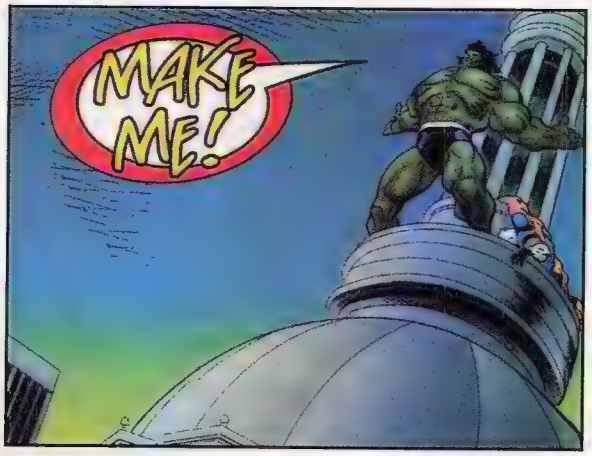
And part of finding out who this guy is these days requires the book to slow down. It's moving so awfully fast that entire plotlines are drawn up in an issue and then stopped dead. It's shocking how quick an intriguing subplot with Talbot came to an end when he suddenly realized in one panel that he was wrong. (Was he perhaps under mind-control from the villainous Omnibus, which was slightly hinted at, but not explained?) Another example of the lightspeed plotlines is when the Hulk is purposely hit by a nuclear missile to make the world think he's dead, and upon his return, he mentions in passing that he hid in a Pantheon safehouse to survive the blast. The Hulk shows up in public later anyway, so the storyline is rendered moot.



Because the book moves so quickly, it has become particularly reader-unfriendly. There are no recaps, no explanation of what's going on, nothing. Janis, a character from the *Hulk: Future Imperfect* limited series, pops up with no explanation given for five issues. It's enough to get even a constant reader a little tired.

The Buzz: Former *Wolverine* vet Adam Kubert is slated to take over as penciler in '97, which should pump up the visuals of *Hulk*. Watch for more Hulk interest when he plays a major role in the "Heroes Reborn" universe.

The Skinny: What happened to this book? Only a few years ago this was one of Marvel's best titles, and now it's one of Marvel's most confusing.



The Hulk's "Hey, I want the world to think I'm dead" plot lasted exactly three issues

Peter David's writing is often chock full of humanity, as Molecule Man deals with his recent break-up

The Verdict: 2

ROBIN

Can the Boy Wonder be more exciting than Batman?

Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: DC Comics
Creative Team: Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Bob Smith
Price/Frequency: $1.95/Monthly

The Good: Writer Chuck Dixon has built Robin into the kind of kid you wish you knew. Dixon never allows the reader to forget that while Robin's a superhero, he's still just a 14-year-old. Whether it's through Robin's mistakes (like in issue #29 where he slips on a puddle while trying to take down Maxie Zeus) or Tim Drake's adolescent admiration for former boxing champ Ted Grant (a.k.a. Wildcat in issue #31), Robin lives and breathes as a teenager. Like most teens, he's got problems that you had when you were his age. High school isn't easy. His girlfriend Ariana dyes her hair when she thinks Tim's not interested in her; he hates it, but won't tell her. (Throw in the fact that he's constantly trying to hide his secret identity when something "suddenly comes up" on a date, and this kid seems 100 percent genuine.)

Besides Dixon's great dialogue (you'd swear he was a teenager himself instead of a 42-year-old!), his storytelling is pure energy. The stories will always hook you from page one and follow through until the end. Throughout the seemingly nonstop action, Dixon also finds time to pep-

Above: Robin *always has a good moral core*

At right: Robin's mistakes make him a very human character

per each story with just the right amount of "quiet" times, letting you get to know more about Tim Drake as a person. And there's usually a good moral center at the heart of the book (everybody deserves to live, as he taught the Spoiler in #35).

The Bad: Robin needs a stronger artistic vision. Now that Staz Johnson has been named regular penciler, he needs to develop his own clean style for the book rather than try to mix the styles of former *Robin* pencilers Tom Grummett and Tom Lyle. (To Johnson's credit, he has continued to make *Robin* what it should be: the visually bright and shining star in the dark, grim world of the Batman titles.)

The other big strike against *Robin* is the evil crossovers: "Contagion," "Legacy" and ultimately "Final Night." While DC won't be doing Bat-crossovers anymore, they've still hurt this series' momentum over the past year. Without any story recap at all, new readers are completely clueless as to what's going on. (In "The Final Night" issue, the sun was gone without any explanation whatsoever!) Recommendation: If crossover issues must be used, slap a brief paragraph recap in the beginning or even on the inside front cover to cue in readers who might only read *Robin* every month.

The Buzz: The latter half of the movie title "Batman and Robin" should bring quite a bit of attention to the character next summer.

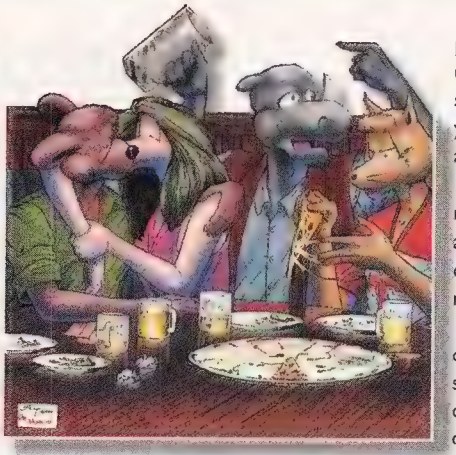
The Skinny: Now that *Robin*'s a self-contained book, all it needs is a distinctive art style to steer it, and this title's headed toward greatness. With excellent writing and characterization, Robin is surprisingly a much more exciting and enjoyable character than Batman.

The Verdict: 5

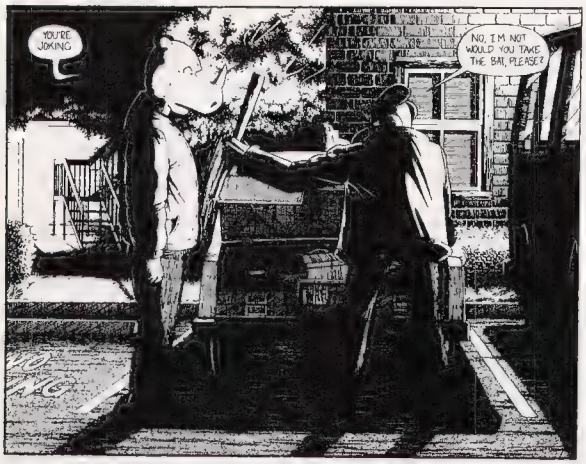
HEPCATS

No flash and all substance, this book goes for the jugular

Genre: Drama/Relationship
Publisher: Antarctic Press
Creative Team: Martin Wagner
Price/Frequency: $2.95/Monthly (finally!)



The Good: *Hepcats* has just about the most realistic characters you'll ever find in any comic. Whether it's the hormone-hopping Joey desperately reaching for a quarter he dropped under a washing machine, the happy-go-lucky Gunther babbling on enthusiastically about his new computer program, the sensitive Arnie worried sick about his girlfriend Erica, or Erica burying some terrible secret deep inside, these fictional college students magically come to life and you instantly care about them.



Hepcats has a great story with honest dialogue, and Wagner's storytelling abilities are truly exceptional. The first two issues are necessary introductions to the characters and then the book really takes off with #3, the start of the 18-part "Snowblind" storyline. With a number of intriguing and suspenseful issues, Wagner goes for the jugular in "Snowblind" and takes you on one hell of a roller-coaster ride. And when you finally get your answers, he brutally delivers with a Mack truck through your skull.

The art also won't disappoint. Though the characters have animal heads on human bodies, the tight, clean art shines throughout and Wagner doesn't skimp on the details, adding yet another layer of realism to this book.

Hepcats is a very mature book with some very mature themes, and Wagner's use of nudity reminds you of that. But unlike most comics today, the nudity here isn't forced or glamorized; it's simply an extension of the storyline.

The Bad: Originally self-published by Double Diamond Press, the shipping frequency of this book was horrific, taking some seven years to put out only 12 issues. And while Wagner's no longer self-publishing (insuring a monthly schedule!) fans who've read the original series will have to wait almost a full year from now to see the continuation of the epic "Snowblind" tale.

While the nudity added to the realism, it still was slightly distracting at times, and probably wouldn't have changed the story too much if it was masked by an arm or a shadow.

Without a doubt, issue #2 is the only gray area of an otherwise outstanding series. Except for introducing readers to Erica, the story doesn't really go anywhere and there's not much of an ending. Plus, the sideways storytelling technique throughout the entire issue is annoying. (But with #3, "Snowblind" will blow you away—so be patient.)

The Buzz: After a looong hiatus, Hepcats is back on track with a new publisher (Antarctic Press) and a regular shipping schedule. As a bonus, longtime readers can still enjoy the first 12 Antarctic issues 'cause they've got all-new back-up stories in 'em.

The Skinny: Even though there are no flashy costumes or superpowered mutants, *Hepcats* has all the elements of a great comic book: drama, action, adventure, relationship problems and humor. Before you've even put down one issue, you can't wait to pick up the next.

At left and below: Tension mounts as Gunther (left) and Arnie investigate a break-in at Erica's apartment

The Verdict: 5

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Will Eisner "Spirit of Comics" Retailer Award, presented under the auspices of Comic-Con International: San Diego, is given to an individual retailer who has done an outstanding job of supporting the comics art medium both in the community and within the industry at large.

GUIDELINES

The guidelines for nomination include:

- Any retailer established in business for at least two years is eligible to be nominated.
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- Winners will be announced at a special ceremony at the 1996 Comic Book Expo.
- Previous winners are not eligible for nomination.

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- *Adherence to standard ethical business practices.*

1997 Spirit of Comics Award Nominating Ballot

I place the following name in nomination for the 1997 Will Eisner "Spirit of Comics" Retailer Award. I understand that only retailers whose business has been established for at least two years are eligible for nomination and that any nominees found not to adhere to standard ethical business practices will be disqualified.
[Please print or type]

Retailer's Name _____

Store Name _____ *Store Phone Number* _____

Complete Store Address _____

_____

[Provide brief statements explaining how your nominee excels in each of the following categories. Use additional sheets if necessary.]

Support of a wide variety of innovative material: _____

_____

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Knowledge: _____

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Community activity: _____

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Quality of store image: _____

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Additional comments: _____

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Mail Ballot to: "Spirit of Comics" Award, c/o Comic-Con International
311 Fourth Avenue #512, San Diego, CA 92101. Or you may fax it to: 619-544-0743

Ballots must be received by February 29, 1997

1996 Sponsors:
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PICKS

BEHOLD!

THEY'RE MAD, I TELL YOU!

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN DECEMBER

AQUAMAN #29

ASTRO CITY #5

TITLES DENOTED WITH A **MR** CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

AQUAMAN #29

DC COMICS The revamped Black Manta resurfaces in Aquaman's life (get it? "Resurfaces"? It's a pun cause y'know, Aquaman's under the water and...um, forget it), and he's causing trouble as usual. Besides snaggin' the Sea Devils, he's got control of a bunch o' prehistoric beasties which he plans on using to wreak some havoc in the oceans. (Boy, Black Manta never caused so much trouble on "The Super Friends." Maybe he was just afraid of Black Vulcan.) By Peter David, Martin Egeland and Howard Shum. **$1.75**

ASTRO CITY (VOL. 2) #5

IMAGE Brian, the wannabe teen superhero sidekick, finally gets his big break. He's offered a chance to team up with the Confessor—a dark, moody hero—which he gladly takes. But when they head off into the dark, dangerous nighttime world of Astro City, Brian may not live to regret his decision. By Kurt Busiek, Brent Anderson and Will Blyberg. **$2.50**

AZTEK, THE ULTIMATE MAN #7

DC COMICS Seems the Joker's escaped from Arkham again, only this time he's heading for the city of Vanity, laying a trap for Batman along the way. So it's up to Arkham and double-special guest star Batman to join forces and stop the J-man before anyone gets hurt. (Seeing how much Bats loves teaming up with other superheroes, especially young inexperienced ones, Aztek better watch his step around the Dark Knight as well as the Joker or Az's headed for a batarang-enema.) By Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, N. Steven Harris and Keith Champagne. **$1.75**

BATMAN #539

DC COMICS Batman vs. The Undertaker?!? Neat! Maybe it'll be in a steel cage match so that wormy Pall Bearer guy can't interfere and...what? We're not talkin' about the pro wrasslin' Undertaker, but some new villain guy robbing graves in Gotham? Oh. That'll be nice, too. By Doug Moench, Kelley Jones and John Beatty. **$1.95**

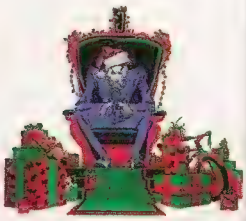
BATMAN & ROBIN ADVENTURES #15

DC COMICS Halley's Circus, the place where young Dick Grayson's parents were killed, is the focus of this ish. Dick, as Robin, returns to the Circus to investigate some strange happenings. Seems there's been a string of crimes, and questions have started to arise about Boston Brand, the Circus' star attraction (psst, for those of you not paying attention: Boston Brand is really *Deadman*). Robin's gonna have to be on his toes to figure this one out! By Ty Templeton, Brandon Kruse and Rick Burchett. **$1.75**

BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #3 (OF 13)

DC COMICS Batman stumped? It seems impossible, but it's true. He's on the case, but he just can't figure out the identity of the serial killer known as Holiday. His investigation does reveal, however, that somebody else is on the trail of Holiday as well. Somebody by the name of...the Joker! By Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale. **$2.95**

BATMAN #539



BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #3

THE BLACK LAMB #4

DC/MARVEL: ALL ACCESS #4

THE BLACK LAMB #4 (OF 6)

HELIX/DC Black Lamb discovers a weird group of monster-hunters (as opposed to the normal kind) while trying to help out a Malaysian mosquito-vampire. (Malaysian mosquito-vampire? Geez, sounds like something you'd find in Kenner's Batman toy line, right next to Arctic Polar Sled Batman and Dress-Wearing Tea Party Batman.). Anyway, along with that, he discovers a consciousness that's survived for hundreds of years. Anybody else think Tim Truman was woozy on glue fumes when he wrote this? By Timothy Truman. **$2.50**

DAILY BUGLE #3 (OF 3)

MARVEL While the *Bugle* reporters are still trying to track down what happened to Betty Brant, Betty's trying to survive her recent underworld encounter. Plus, she wastes no time in figuring out the connection between Tommy Fude and mobster Morgan Hall. And there aren't even any superheroes to come to her rescue! By Paul Grist, Karl Kerschl and Greg Adams. **$2.50**

DAREDEVIL #361

MARVEL Since Foggy is best buds with Daredevil, he's gotta use his influence to convince DD to investigate a mysterious industrial spy. What DD doesn't know is that the spy is one of the best in the business...The Black Widow! By Karl Kesel, Cary Nord and Matt Ryan. Kesel says, "The Widow was the leader of the Avengers and it doesn't look like she did a very good job, at least that's how she sees it. She's basically starting a one-woman mission to avenge the Avengers. It's gonna be a story where she comes dangerously close to crossing the line and DD helps pull her back" **$1.50**

THE DARKNESS #2

TOP COW Jackie Estacado is just getting the hang o' the Darkness power when he's assaulted on three fronts. The Angelus Warriors want revenge on him for trying to cap the Don's son-in-law and the Brotherhood of the Darkness want him as a leader. But all poor Jackie wants is to be able to date women again! (Heck, we've got that problem and we don't even have any neat superpowers to pass the time.) By Garth Ennis, Marc Silvestri and Batt. **$2.50**

DC/MARVEL: ALL ACCESS #4

DC COMICS The JLA and the X-Men team up to save both universes, while Access is busy working on his love life. He's got one girlfriend over in DC's corner and another in the Marvel Universe (the dirty rotten two-timer). Well, hopefully things will work out and no one'll accidentally fall into the "Heroes Reborn" universe. By Ron Marz, Jackson Guice and Josef Rubinstein. **$2.95**

DETECTIVE COMICS #706

DC COMICS The riddles are coming fast and furious for the Dynamic Duo as they do their best to figure out the Riddler's puzzles. If they don't, the Riddler's final piece of the puzzle will be the death of the Cluemaster. By Chuck Dixon, Graham Nolan and David Roach. Dixon says, "It's quite an issue. Batman has to cart around a potentially explosive—literally—Cluemaster, while Robin and Oracle struggle to solve probably the most complex web of riddles the Riddler has ever laid out. They also interrupt a mafia funeral with hilarious results." **$1.95**

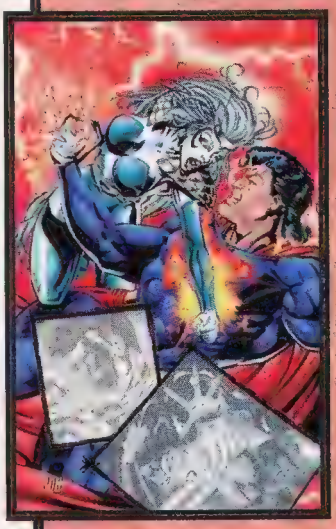
THE FLASH #122

DC COMICS Flash says goodbye to Keystone City. The city fathers are sick of all the supervillain nastiness, so they ask Flash to pack up and take his superhero gig somewhere else. So Wally heads toward California for some sand and sun in Santa Marta. Sounds great, right? Wrong. Linda doesn't join him, 'cause she's not quite ready to uproot her life for the speedster. By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn, Paul Ryan and John Nyberg. **$1.75**

READ THIS BOOK!

JLA #2

DC COMICS When the intergalactic superteam The Hyperclan promise global peace, cure to disease and a veritable modern-day golden age, the people of Earth couldn't be happier. But the JLA smell a rat and split up to investigate what's really going on behind the Hyperclan's "miracles." Remember that old saying, "United we stand, divided we fall"? The League falls hard as the 'clan takes them all down. All but "the least of them," but what can a single hero do when the rest of the League has fallen? Guess it depends on who that hero is...By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell. Porter says, "I'm having a blast. I don't want to stop working on each individual page. I haven't had the good fortune to meet Grant yet, but his scripts get better and better each time. The stuff he gives me is so much fun to draw that I hope readers have as much fun reading them as I've had drawing them." **$1.95**



GENERATION X #34

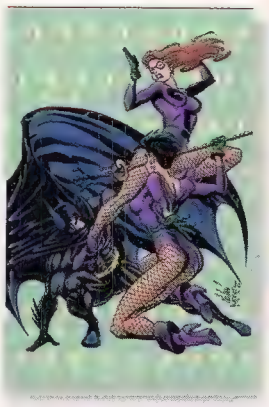
MARVEL It's a pretty strange Christmas for the Generation X gals. They travel to Monet's family mansion for a little Yuletide cheer and end up talking about their past, including how each of them used their powers for the first time. Then that psycho Emplate guy shows up, but not to suck the genetic marrow out of anyone. Nope. He's just there for a little heart-to-heart talk with his sister, Monet. By Scott Lobdell and Mitch Byrd. **$1.95**

GREEN LANTERN #83

DC COMICS "Retribution" Part 1 (of 3). Green Lantern gets attacked and beaten up by a...girl? A GIRL!?! Somebody kick his sissy-ass out of the JLA! Well, okay, it's not just any girl, it's a tough chick named Fatality, an alien who's tracked him to Earth, blaming him for the destruction of her planet. Eventually, GL works things out, but as a going-away present, she steals his power battery. D'oh! By Ron Marz, Darryl Banks and Romeo Tanghal. Marz says, "Fatality's character is kind of a Green Lantern bounty hunter. Oviously, the biggest trophy for her wall would be Kyle's head since he's the last Green Lantern. After this, we're going to introduce Jade, Alan Scott's daughter, as a member of the supporting cast. Then I think we're going to send Kyle back to California so we can meet his mom." **$1.75**

HITMAN #11

DC COMICS Thinking that Tommy Monaghan (that Hitman guy) has a contract out on him, Green Lantern decides it's best to make the first move. But when they get to talkin', GL learns he's been set up by the government, which wants to keep an eye on the growing superhero population...keeping an eye on them by growing some of their own. By Garth Ennis and John McCrea. **$2.25**



DETECTIVE COMICS #706

THE FLASH #122

READ THIS BOOK!

LOBO/MASK

DC COMICS Lobo is contracted to kill a criminal who has spread death, mayhem and destruction across the galaxy. The problem is that the criminal is the Mask (but you probably figured that out by now from the title). So, these two characters mix it up, but, having no moral standards, anyone or anything that gets in their way is fragged...and that includes New York. Maybe Marvel should have hired these two to take care of Onslaught. By Alan Grant, John Arcudi and Doug Mahnke. That Mask-ed man himself, Arcudi says, "It was the most fun I've had writing a comic in a long, long time. It doesn't even need words and that's to Doug Mahnke's credit. He's one of the great unsung heroes of comics. Most of the attention should point to Alan and Doug, 'cause I really feel they made the project work as well as it did." **$5.95**

IMPULSE #22

DC COMICS If Max has a secret, Impulse's gotta know about it. But this time it could be a good thing, 'cause this secret's a threat to both their lives. So while Max runs off to straighten things out, Bart gets Jesse Quick to help him track Max and get the skinny on what's going on. By Ruben Diaz, Craig Rousseau and Wayne Faucher. Diaz, filling in for writer Mark Waid this month, says, "Mark just let me play in his sandbox while he gets his plate clean of things. It's pretty much a Jesse and Bart story. I don't want to give away the ending but it's kind of touching on one of the milestones in Bart's life. If you're a real big fan of all the other stuff that goes on in the DCU, you can probably figure out the mystery before they do." **$1.75**

LEAVE IT TO CHANCE #4

HOMAGE/IMAGE Oh no! It's the Toad God and he's come to destroy the city! The only...*chance* (ba-da-bump!) for salvation is Chance Falconer and her dragon St. George. They've gotta figure out who the main power behind the war for Devil's Echo is or the entire city is doomed! By James Robinson and Paul Smith. **$2.50**

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #89

DC COMICS Being trapped in the 20th century is a little hard on the 30th century teens. First, two of the Legionnaires get in a knock-down, drag-out fight which ends up with one of them quitting the team. Then, Brainy starts acting very, very weird (well, weirder then usual). What's up? By Tom Peyer, Tom McCraw, Jeffrey Moy and Ron Boyd. **$2.25**

LEGIONNAIRES #45

DC COMICS The Legionnaires take off for Vyrga, home of Gates (that annoying teleporting bug thing), where they discover that some sort of mutant beastie (Krakoa?) is terrorizing the world...and they gotta stop it. Also, M'Onel continues his search for the Emerald Empress. By Roger Stern, Tom McCraw, Philip Moy and W.C. Carani. **$2.25**

MARS ATTACKS THE IMAGE UNIVERSE #1 (OF 4)

IMAGE For a race that has mastered interplanetary travel, the

Martians are pretty stupid. Instead of attacking "our" superhero-less Earth, they attack the Image Earth. So now they've gotta deal with all the superpowered Image guys who're gonna put up a much bigger fight than we ever would. But don't think everything's going to be happy. Some of your favorite characters won't be coming out of this little war alive. By Keith Giffen and Andy Smith. Giffen says, "[The Martians] savage the living hell out of us, then the heroes and the army get together and we've got a little war on our hands. There is an extraordinarily disturbing sequence with Libby, Super-Patriot's daughter, that will have far-reaching consequences in Erik [Larsen's] books. I think it really captures the flavor of the [original 1962 Topps trading] cards. As a matter of fact, I tried to work in as many panels that are images from the cards as I could." **$2.50**

NIGHTWING #5

DC COMICS A kidnapped mob lawyer and his little girl are going to be killed unless Nightwing can save them from the deadly clutches of Lady Vic. ("Lady Vic"? Don't sound like no lady to us!) Anyway, Nightwing's gotta somehow get in, save the kid and her father, and kick some serious ass. Oh yeah, all this takes place on an out-of-control yacht on the ocean. By Chuck Dixon, Scott McDaniel and Karl Story. Dixon says, "Lady Vic is a bankrupt English Noblewoman who is apparently working both sides of the gang war in Blüdhaven. She needs money in order to keep the old homestead, so she has to go around the world killing people." **$1.95**

POWER OF SHAZAM! #23

DC COMICS There's a new villain in town and his name's Mr. Atom! Captain Marvel and Mary Marvel are gonna have their hands full trying to put the kibosh on him. Plus, a new WHIZ employee called Del-Roy Amberson somehow helps the Marvels stop a worldwide disaster. Brown-noser. By Jerry Ordway, Peter Krause and Mike Manley. **$1.75**

PREACHER #22

VERTIGO/DC "Crusaders" Part 4 (of 6). Lot's o' stuff going on in this ish: Allfather D'Aronique finally reveals his master plan; Herr Starr gets something that's been coming to him for a long time; Jesse hears news he never wanted to know; and, to top it all off, there's something down in the dungeons of Masada that no one's aware of (for Jesse's sake, we hope it's not the same thing we've had cooking in the *Wizard* men's room for the past year...) By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **MR $2.50**

HITMAN #11

LEAVE IT TO CHANCE #4

PAPERBACK PICKS

Trade Paperbacks You Won't Wanna Miss

Superman: Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow?
(DC) Reprinting *Action Comics* #583 and *Superman* #423, this pre-*Crisis* Superman tale recounts the Man of Steel's later years. After a time of relative peace and quiet, nuisances from Supes' past come back, pumped up into vicious deadly enemies. And to top it all off, Superman's identity has been revealed, so all his family and friends are now targets. It all culminates in one last stand at the Fortress of Solitude. By Alan Moore, Curt Swan, George Pérez and Kurt Schaffenberger. **$5.95**

Preacher: Until the End of the World ▶
(Vertigo/DC) Collecting *Preacher* #8-#17, this book retells "All in the Family" where Jesse has to re-confront his psycho grandmother, in one of the sickest, roughest stories ever. And in "Hunters," the gang takes on The Grail, an over-the-top religious organization bent on controlling Jesse's power. By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **$14.95**

Strangers in Paradise: It's a Good Life
(Abstract Studio) Reprinting *Strangers in Paradise* #10-#13, this collection ties everything up for Katchoo, David and his sister, Francine and the whole mess everyone was thrown into, in an action-packed, volatile conclusion. Also included in here are pin-ups and behind-the-scenes illustrations of Katchoo, Francine and David. By Terry Moore. **$8.95**

ROBIN #38

DC COMICS Robin's in for the hunt of his life now that Slyfox is back with plans for his biggest heist yet. And that's not the only problem. Roy Raymond Jr., a TV crime fighter who thinks he's the bestest, is also on the case. So Robin's gotta deal with the headache of a Geraldo-wanna-be *and* a supervillain. By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Bob Smith. **$1.95**

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #47

DC COMICS "The Blackhawk" Part 3 (of 4). It's a team-up of Blackhawk and Sandman as they both try to prove Polish pilot Jahnoas Prohaska's innocence by trapping the real murderer. Plus, get a look at Sandy, Sandman's new driver. (Hint: she's really Wesley's girlfriend Dian). Can Brute and Glob be far behind? By Matt Wagner, Steven T. Seagle, Matt Smith and Richard Case. **MR $2.50**

PICKS

SIN CITY: LOST, LONELY AND LETHAL

LEGEND/DARK HORSE A return to the dark, lonely streets of Sin City. In this ish, you get three hard-hittin' tales! In "Blue Eyes," there's a new gal in town named Dalia, who'll soon be a major player in the Sin City. "Rats" deals with a 90-year-old man paying for past crimes, and "Fat Man and Little Boy" stars those two incompetent thugs from *Sin City: That Yellow Bastard*. By the warm and fuzzy Frank Miller. **MR $2.95**

SPIDER-MAN: HOBGOBLIN LIVES! #2 (OF 3)

MARVEL Who was...sorry, who IS the original Hobgoblin? Spidey's on the case, but as he begins getting closer to the truth, Hobby pulls an ace out of his sleeve: If Spidey doesn't back off, somebody close to Spider-Man gets waxed. (Hey, read this book! Roger Stern had the best run on Spidey ever! See how Spider-Man is supposed to be written!) By Roger Stern, Ron Frenz and George Pérez.

LEGIONNAIRES #45

PREACHER #22

STRAY BULLETS #11

EL CAPITÁN Beth, Orson and Nina are still trapped in Seaside, a town that gives new meaning to the word *strange*. So when a fair comes along, they figure they'll go, have some fun and forget about their worries for a while. But they're in for quite a big surprise. Look out for the strangest pie-eating contest you've ever seen. And be prepared to see the return of a character who hasn't been around for quite some time—Virginia! By David Lapham. **$2.95**

TYRANT #6

SPIDER-BABY GRAFIX In this final chapter of the first story arc, we see Mama T. Rex doing her best to defend her li'l T-Rexes from those pesky scavengers out to have them a Baby Rex McMuffin. We also get to see just how little Tyrant's first day of life finishes up. By Stephen R. Bissette. **$3.95**

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN #18

MARVEL Let's see...the Headsman wants control of the mobs, the Green Goblin wants the Headsman dead. Now, the Headsman's ready to take on the mob bosses...and the Goblin's all ready to kill the Headsman. Hmm...looks to us like Spidey's got his hands full. By Kurt Busiek, Pat Olliffe and Al Vey. **99 CENTS** W

AT A GLANCE

A LISTING OF THE HIGH-PROFILE BOOKS SHIPPING IN DECEMBER

Avengers #4 (Marvel)
Vision's brain-dead, the Enchantress controls Wanda, and Cap's whining about getting the Swordsman court-martialed. Some superteam. **$1.95**

Captain America #4 (Marvel)
Cap's still fighting the Red Skull and his gang when Namor enters the picture. **$1.95**

Catwoman/Vampirella: The Furies (DC)
Vampirella and Catwoman team up to find out who's on a killing spree in Gotham. **$4.95**

Curse of the Spawn #4 (Image)
Spawn battles Abaddon to save Madrid and Matthew from the Anti-Pope. **$1.95**

Dawn #5 (Sirius)
Dawn reveals her secrets to Darrian. **$2.95**

Fantastic Four #4 (Marvel)
The FF head to Wakanda and meet the Black Panther. **$1.95**

Gen^{13} #16 (Image)
Helmut's back and he's picking on the Gen^{13} girls.Can the boys save 'em? **$2.50**

Incredible Hulk #450 (Marvel)
Doc Strange gets sucked into the "Heroes Reborn" Universe. Will his magic be able to help his buddies get back home (and will he tell Cap the "A" looked better on his head than the Nazi wings)? **$2.95**

Iron Man #4 (Marvel)
Iron Man's gotta be quick to avoid being split open by the Living Laser. **$1.95**

Onslaught: Epilogue (Marvel)
With Xavier under wraps, is the threat of Onslaught really gone forever? **$2.95**

Spawn #57 (Image)
Cy-Gor and Spawn battle, as we learn why Cy-Gor's been hunting Spawn. **$1.95**

Spider-Man Books (Marvel)
In *Sensational Spider-Man #13*, Spidey, Ka-Zar, Shanna and Zabu fight to save the Savage Land **($1.95)**. *Amazing Spider-Man #420* brings Nate Grey, X-Man, to the Parker's home for Christmas **($1.50)**. *Spider-Man #77* sees the blood-sucking vampire Morbius return to Spidey's life **($1.95)**. And the Chameleon returns in *Spectacular Spider-Man #243* to wreak havoc for poor ol' Spidey **($1.50)**

Star Wars Books (Dark Horse)
In *Tales of the Jedi—The Golden Age of the Sith #3*, the Sith Empire wants to control Gav and Jori Daragon's hyperspace short-cuts, putting them in grave danger. In *Star Wars: X-Wing Rogue Squadron—The Warrior Princess #2*, the Squadron has a fight on its hands trying to bring another planet into the Rebel Alliance. **($2.95 each)**

Superman Books (DC)
In *Superman: The Man of Tomorrow #7*, people wonder if Lex Luthor is really the nice guy he claims to be **(1.95)**. Superman's friends wonder what they'd do if they had Supes' powers in *Superman #120* **(1.95)**. *Adventures of Superman #543* shows the formation of the Superman Revenge Squad **(1.95)**. And in *Action Comics #730*, the Revenge Squad is in the process of destroying Metropolis and Superman **($1.95)**

Tales of the Age of Apocalypse (Marvel)
While Apocalypse tries to heal himself on the moon, the X-Men decide to take the opportunity to kill him once and for all. **$5.95**

Uncanny X-Men #341 (Marvel)
Rogue gets a special kind of gift on Christmas—one she never thought was possible. **$1.95**

Wolverine #110 (Marvel)
What does the secret organization spying on Wolvie want with him? **$1.95**

X-Files #25 (Topps)
When agents from a secret CIA program are murdered, the CIA tries to cover everything up. **$2.95**

X-Men #61 (Marvel)
Storm, Cyclops and Wolvie have to defeat the unearthly forces released by Candra. Plus, someone wants the Hellfire Club up and running again. **$1.95** ●

FROM THE MASTER OF MACABRE MANGA - GO NAGAI!

VIOLENCE JACK

Violence Jack does not make for easy viewing. While Go Nagai's work is often noted for its sometimes suspect sexual tendencies and high gore factor, the humor with which he tempers many of his stories is missing here.

Jack's world is a place of arbitrary and unremitting horror, where death stalks the weak and where innocence is ravaged by the strong - unless they wise up quick. And yet, Nagai shows us that even in this survival-of-the-fittest slaughterhouse, moral choices must be made.

AVAILABLE FOR THE FIRST TIME ON VIDEO!

First serialized in Shonen Magazine in 1973, Violence Jack was Go Nagai's first real attempt at creating and exploring his own world. To do this, he subjected Japan to an appalling series of earthquakes.

Cut off from all civilization and ravaged by disease and starvation, the surviving population of this new tomb of earth descended quickly into barbarism, doomed to a life of grubbing subsistence and harried by roaming bands of vicious psychopaths.

NOT RATED, EDITED VERSIONS. PARENTAL DISCRETION ADVISED. CONTAINS VIOLENCE, EXPLICIT LANGUAGE AND MATURE SITUATIONS.

Released from his concrete tomb by Section A, Jack agrees to fight for them, against their enemies. But no one in this tomb-city is as innocent as they claim, and as an all-out war erupts between the Sections, Jack must decide where his loyalties lie before the inhabitants of Evil Town wipe each other out!

Street Date: 9/24/96

Jack is caught in the crossfire when the gang attacks another settlement and he vows to fight for the villagers. But the "Hell's Wind" biker army have some nasty surprises in store and military resources at their disposal. Can even Violence Jack withstand the massed firepower of Hell's Wind?

Street Date: 10/22/96

A huge comet erupts from the depths of space, hurling into the Earth with the force of a thousand hydrogen bombs. Slumking has risen to power in the corpse-strewn wasteland that was once Japan. Only Violence Jack, the ultimate spirit of death and retribution, has the courage to challenge his rule.

Street Date: 11/26/96

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by Carl Gustav Horn

the mouse and miyazaki

Disney does anime videos in July

If you've never heard of Hayao Miyazaki, don't worry, you will. Hailed as the most successful of all anime film-makers, Miyazaki has inked an unprecedented deal with Disney, where the entertainment juggernaut will market eight anime films produced or directed by Miyazaki on video here and worldwide. The deal involves Miyazaki netting a reported $10 to $20 million, building anime into a force to be reckoned with in American entertainment.

Miyazaki and his Studio Ghibli have had only two films available in the United States: "Warriors of the Wind" (a hacked-up version of "Nausicäa of the Valley of Wind") and "My Neighbor Totoro" (praised by Siskel and Ebert, selling over half a million copies through Fox Video). Both are part of the Disney pact.

Miyazaki was born in 1941, and entered the anime business right after college. He didn't achieve popular success until his Studio Ghibli made the film version of Miyazaki's post-apocalyptic eco-epic manga "Nausicäa" in 1984. "Nausicäa" is a movie known for its drama, but also for its stunning visual leaps in art direction, special effects, lighting and camera work. Miyazaki doesn't think of himself as an adult film-maker in the way that a Mamoru Oshii or Katsuhiro Otomo does, and his protagonists are usually children or adolescents. But his talent lies in his knack for creating movies that can be appreciated by a film audience of any age. The trademark of a Studio Ghibli film is that its colors shine with a gem-like clarity, fluid motion and, in a Miyazaki-directed film in particular, the spirit of flight; every movie he's made at Ghibli has involved adventures with flying machines or creatures, especially the retro-tech planes and airships of the first half of this century.

"Kiki's Delivery Service" is one of eight anime videos to be distributed by Disney

Besides "Nausicäa" and "My Neighbor Totoro" (a charming fable of two little girls who encounter a forest spirit), the eight-film Disney deal includes his 1986 "Laputa," a Jules Verne-like quest for a floating city built by a previous human civilization; 1989's "Kiki's Delivery Service," about a young witch undergoing a personal trial in a never-never '50s Europe; 1992's "Porco Rosso," Miyazaki's first #1 box-office smash (beating American blockbusters like "Batman Returns" and "Unforgiven" in ticket sales) starring a guilt-ridden World War I flying ace fighting aerial pirates in the Depression-era Mediterranean; and the as-yet unfinished "Princess Mononoke," a tale of a monster's bride in medieval Japan. The two other films in the deal, produced by Miyazaki and directed by Takahata, are equally distinguished. 1994's "Pom Poko," about the last stand of a band of mythological creatures against a housing development, was Japan's candidate that year to be considered for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film (it was turned down by the Academy). And 1991's "Only Yesterday," where a Tokyo office worker journeys into the countryside to reconcile with the ghosts of her childhood—a mature masterpiece that deserves to be mentioned in the same breath as "Patlabor 2" or "The Wings of Honneamise."

For Disney to get involved in anime brings the wheel full circle. Starting in 1947, Osamu Tezuka, the founder of

Fans can now join the search for a lost city in "Laputa"

modern Japanese comics (and known affectionately as "The God of Manga"), drew liberally from early Disney films like "Bambi" and "Pinnochio." Tezuka tried to inject the same cinematic quality into his work and introduced the big eyes of Disney characters into modern manga and later anime. And even though some of the later generations of anime creators such as Hideaki Anno ("Neon Genesis Evangelion") and Buichi Terasawa ("Cobra") reject the more recent Disney style, there can be no denying that Disney was a tremendous inspiration to both manga and anime as we know them today.

But Disney's involvement is also curious, given the 1994 controversy, which made headlines both in the U.S. and Japan, over the noticeable similarities between Disney's "The Lion King" and Tezuka's '60s anime "Kimba the White Lion." Disney claimed that none of its production staff had heard of "Kimba" or Tezuka—which was a stance assumed to deflect possible lawsuits (Disney's denial was even lampooned on "The Simpsons"). The news was tempered by the acknowledgment among Tezuka's fans on both sides of the Pacific that he would probably have been flattered that Disney took inspiration from him, as he had from Disney.

No specific video release dates or prices were available at press time. Nor were decisions about issues such as re-dubbing Miyazaki's films, offering them in subtitled versions and whether or not there will be any theatrical releases in the U.S. "Manga Scene" will report these details as they become available while this major story in the advance of anime into America continues to develop. W

Carl Horn loves his neighbor Totoro. It's those damn kids that keep trashing his property that irks him.

picks of the month

manga

Gon

(Paradox Press, $5.95, b&w, 112 pgs.)

DC Comics has been taking chances on comics beyond the mainstream with their Vertigo and Helix lines, but haven't done the same with manga until now with the offbeat yet perceptive *Gon* series by Masashi Tanuka. This set of four digest-sized graphic novels, also including *Gon, Gon Again, Here Today, Gon Tomorrow!* and *Going, Going, Gon* detail the travels of a small but fierce one-foot tall dinosaur in the modern world. Since the stories are told without dialogue or sound effects (the only text is in brief introductions), each are tests of conveying character, humor and story development to any audience through one's art alone. But whereas you might expect an attempt to be drawn in a simplified fashion, Tanuka displays incredibly detailed line work on a level comparable to *Cerebus*'s Gerhard, and a command of portraying exotic animals and wilderness scenes that have a documentary feel. For American creators, there's a lot to be learned here about storytelling without words.

anime

Big Wars

(U.S. Manga Corps, subtitled, 75 mins., $29.95, for mature audiences)

With a better plot than "Independence Day," and on a lot lower budget, "Big Wars" is a satisfyingly adult story of future war in the shifting sands of a half-inhabited Mars where natural conditions leave man to fight a World War II-era campaign on the dunes against the Gods, a human-appearing enemy who claim divine authority to stop our race from expanding beyond our world. And just like a 1940s war film, "Big Wars" has a *noir* tone—the conflict is fought not only with arms but by terrorism, espionage, subversion and propaganda, creating a mood that's tense, paranoid, and hallucinogenic. This video features the "realist" character designs of such similarly dark anime as "The Professional" and "Wicked City," whose art direction it also resembles. Based on a SF novel by Yoshio Aramaki, author of the controversial and as-yet unreleased in America W.W. II alternate-history anime "The Dark Blue Fleet," "Big Wars" is a very high-quality OAV that should please those anime fans who need to take just a little vacation from the cute. ●

CHARACTER PROFILE: Silver Surfer

BY MATTHEW BRADY

VITAL STATS

REAL NAME: Norrin Radd
AGE: unknown
HEIGHT: 6' 4"
WEIGHT: unknown
HAIR COLOR: none
EYE COLOR: white
FIRST APPEARANCE: *Fantastic Four* #48
TITLE CURRENTLY APPEARING IN: *Silver Surfer*
MAJOR ENEMIES: Thanos, Mephisto, Dr. Doom, Uni-Lord

ORIGIN

As one of the peace-loving inhabitants of the utopia-like Zenn-La, Norrin Radd led a quiet life of study and contemplation. While the rest of the planet's populace had descended into hedonism and debauchery, Radd felt the only way to grow was to continually explore his world. But then Zenn-La's peace was shattered by the cosmic being known as Galactus, who traveled through space consuming the life energy of planets, thereby destroying them.

Radd pleaded with Galactus to spare the idyllic Zenn-La, but Galactus' hunger could not be dissuaded. While he meant Zenn-La no ill will, Galactus had traveled a great distance to devour the life essence of a suitable planet, and could not begin his search anew. Realizing that it was the only way to spare the planet, Radd volunteered to serve as Galactus' herald for the remainder of eternity if only Galactus would leave the planet in peace. After considering the offer, Galactus agreed, and transferred a small portion of his cosmic power into Radd. The power covered Radd with a silvery, indestructible coating, and Galactus also created a unique form of transportation which had a similar coating and resembled a surfboard of Earth. Galactus renamed Radd "Silver Surfer," and allowed him to visit his lover Shalla Bal one last time before beginning his servitude. The two sadly said their farewells, and the Surfer soared off into space in search for planets Galactus could feed on.

The Silver Surfer served Galactus faithfully for an unknown number of years, always trying to seek out planets with a life-force and potential for life, but no sentient beings. Over the years, the Surfer's mission became more and more difficult, so Galactus subtly removed the Surfer's memories of ever being human. Freed from his humanity and moral compunctions, the Surfer focused his attention on planets with sentient beings, and soon traveled to Earth, intent on signaling Galactus, so he could begin consuming the planet.

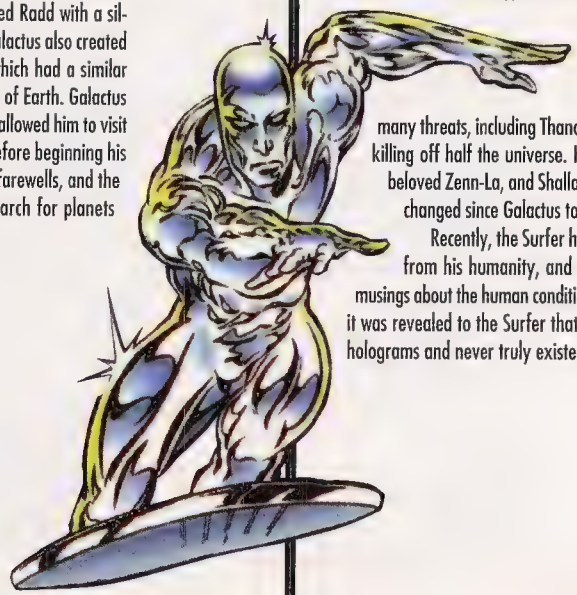
Alerted to Galactus' imminent arrival, the Fantastic Four moved to intercept him and, if necessary, act as Earth's last line of defense. Meanwhile, the Surfer encountered the blind Alicia Masters, who sensed the Surfer's nobility and hidden humanity. Moved by Masters' appeal and beauty of spirit, the Surfer defected from Galactus' service, and aided the Fantastic Four against the enormous being. For his betrayal, Galactus constructed an energy barrier around the Earth, one which was attuned to the Surfer's particular cosmic energy signature and effectively trapped the Surfer on the planet.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

In his years on Earth, the Surfer had many adventures with various human heroes and villains, often seeking to learn more about the spirit of humanity and the different philosophies that guide it. While Earthbound, he became close friends with the Fantastic Four, had frequent confrontations with Dr. Doom (who coveted his power) and also served as a founding member of The Defenders. The Surfer's presence attracted the attention of the demonic Mephisto, who tried numerous times to corrupt the Surfer's noble spirit, and make him his servant.

Finally, with the aid of Mr. Fantastic, the Surfer was able to escape Galactus' energy barrier and once again soar through the cosmos. During that time, the Surfer has seen more cosmic wonders than he ever dared behold, explored the farthest regions of space, and fought against many threats, including Thanos' mad attempts at cosmic conquest by killing off half the universe. He has also been able to return to his beloved Zenn-La, and Shalla Bal, only to realize that they had both changed since Galactus took him for his herald.

Recently, the Surfer has grown farther and farther removed from his humanity, and less concerned with his philosophical musings about the human condition. This was shown most strongly when it was revealed to the Surfer that Zenn-La and Shalla Bal were merely holograms and never truly existed, and he was not surprised at all.



UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

Due to the untimely death of *Silver Surfer* editor Mark Gruenwald, the book's schedule and storyline have been in a slight flux, but new editor Jaye Gardner assures fans that the Surfer will soar on, with stories by J.M. DeMatteis and pencils by Ron Garney. Following the revelations about Zenn-La and Shalla Bal, the Surfer will try to find out who set up the hologram environment of his past and will be returning to Earth—the place where he felt most human—to see if he can rediscover his missing humanity. His altered presence on Earth will attract the attention of Doctor Strange, who will realize that there is something distinctly different about his old friend. Things will heat up by *Silver Surfer* #125, when the Surfer will go toe-to-toe against his former sparring partner and Defenders teammate, the Hulk. Gardner insists that there is a reason behind Surfer's loss of humanity, and all will be made clear soon.

Also, plans call for the comic series to stay true to the character, in order for the upcoming animated TV series to coincide with the comic, and vice versa.

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

Want to hang 10 in the cosmos? Be sure to check out these Surfin' highlights, as selected by the *Wizard* staff:

- ***Silver Surfer* #1** (1987)—See the Fantastic Four help the Surfer escape Galactus' shield on Earth in a manner that will make you hit your forehead with a mighty "D'oh!"

- ***Silver Surfer* #34-#35**—Thanos returns in a big way, but why are he and Surfer pals? (Don't worry—that changes in a big way.)

- ***Silver Surfer* #48**—When the Surfer finds out that Galactus removed all of the hero's ability to feel guilt for the planets the Surfer helped him find, Galactus gives this ability back to him completely. Too bad for the Surfer…

- ***Silver Surfer* #50**—Find out what Norrin Radd was like before he became the Surfer, and how his relationship with his father steered the course of his destiny.

SIMILAR TASTES

If the Silver Surfer sounds like a wave you'd wanna catch, series editor Jaye Gardner suggests you take a look at another book that features a stranger in a strange land: *X-Man*. The *Wizard* staff recommends you check out the Superman books, *Aztek* and the current storyline in *Legion of Super-Heroes*, where the 30th century heroes are trapped in modern times. And if this theme really sounds cool, also check out the classic sci-fi novel *Stranger in a Strange Land* by Robert Heinlein. W

When Matthew Brady, who also previewed 1997's comic line-up in this issue, discovered his latest three paychecks were holograms, he wasn't surprised at all.

Skyline Promotions Presents:

The Two Tickets to Paradise Contest

A little Florida vacation in March is a concept that sounds nice to us. Throw in a comic convention, passes to Disney World and someone else footing the bill and you're suddenly talking 'bout two tickets to paradise!

Well, you have your chance for just such an arrangement. The Orlando MegaCon takes place March 15 and 16, 1997, at the Orange Country Convention Center in (duh) Orlando, Florida. Scheduled guests this year include Peter David, Moebius, John Romita Sr., George Perez, Joe Madureira, Tim Townsend, Bill Tucci, Al Simmons (Spawny-Guy) and Brian Pulido and various Chaos! Comics thugs. With a line-up like that, the Con is sure to be a gas. Wanna go? You can, if you win our...

Grand Prize (1): One lucky reader will receive round-trip airfare for two (that's you and a guest) to Orlando (coach, naturally), tickets to the Orlando MegaCon (Oooh!), tickets to Disneyworld (Your chance to headslap Mickey!), three nights hotel accommodations (at a real swanky hotel with cable TV, complimentary little bottles of shampoo and tiny soap and stuff) and…lunch with the aforementioned Brian Pulido and various Chaos! Comics thugs! Have tea and cookies with the people who do *Lady Death!* All in all, it's a comic geekstravanganza!

Second Prize (10): Fifteen readers will receive an Orlando MegaCon Convention program signed by an array of convention guests.

CHAOS! COMICS®

This contest is sponsored by Skyline Promotions, and we think they're real swell.

How To Play

Random drawing. Fill coupon. Mail. We draw. You winner? You go. You not winner? You no go. We let you know. *Capice*?

Fill this sucker out, put it in an envelope and send it to: Two Tickets to Paradise Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Special earlier-than-you-think deadline is December 29, 1996.

Legal Travel Itinerary

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Skyline Promotions and their immediate families or anyone from that retirement community in Florida that's looking to buy the Charlestown Chiefs. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Two Tickets to Paradise Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Grand Prize winner must be 18 years of age or older unless guest is parent or legal guardian of winner. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Save us a seat by the pool! Save Morris some…uh, never mind. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by December 29, 1996.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected by random drawing from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on January 15, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after January 15, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Two Tickets to Paradise Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Two Tickets To Paradise Entry Form

DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 29, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Aisle seat or window? _____

by Joyce M. Steel

Best of the Best

Well, the year has come and gone, and with it, card fans have added another year's worth of goodies to their collections. And 1996's been chock full o' goodies to choose from! Now that the hype's behind us and the goods, for the most part, are ours for the buyin', let's take a look at the overall best sets of the year. So without further hesitation, here's *Wizard*'s TOP TEN card sets of 1996:

1. KINGDOM COME EXTRA
(Fleer/SkyBox)

This limited edition, hobby-only series has so many things going for it, it's just gotta be named the best set of the year. Painter Alex Ross' style is so unique, and the panoramic format of the cards shows it off to a "T." While some may say Mark Waid's *Kingdom Come* story wandered, that's subject to debate, but even on a bad day, Mark Waid's a better writer than about 95% of the rest of 'em. Increasing the value even more, Waid's card-back summaries add immensely to the detail of the super-spectacular comic series. A must have.

2. MARVEL ULTRA: ONSLAUGHT
(Fleer/SkyBox)

Here's a set brimming with things we never thought we'd see: Professor X goes insane and destroys the entire Marvel Universe? Okay, maybe. But Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld going back to work for Marvel? Truly amazing! And so's the vivid art and interesting text in this set.

3. SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE
(Topps)

Shadows has it all—great subject matter (the Star Wars trilogy) to start from, an original story (*Shadows* takes place between "The Empire Strikes Back" and "Return of the Jedi") and, most impressively, 100 original Brothers Hildebrandt paintings! It's almost a crime for two people to monopolize all that talent—but not quite.

4. A SUPER-TIE: SUPERMAN HOLO & SUPERMAN ACTION PACKS
(Fleer/SkyBox)

With a name like Joyce M. Steel, didja think I could run off a Top Ten list sans The Man of Steel? 'Course not. How do you choose between these two sets? Easy. Look in your driveway. See a BMW or a Mercedes-Benz? Go for the *Holo* series. But if you're like me, you're staring at a Buick Skylark—so opt for the *Action Packs*.

5. INDEPENDENCE DAY
(Topps)

Loved the movie, liked the card set. Again, the Widevision format offers even more of the action, but the title bar going across the bottom quarter of the card front is distracting. The images are cool enough to make up for that, though...especially the pre-production paintings.

6. THIRTY YEARS OF STAR TREK
(Fleer/SkyBox)

This three-set series is the new bible for religious Trekkies...or Trekkers...or whatever the heck they call themselves. It's painstakingly researched and includes everything from characters and technologies to all the awards the original "Star Trek" series won. And those fancy-schmancy SkyMotion cards never looked so good as they do with the Enterprise shooting through 'em.

7. PITT
(Intrepid)

Intrepid brought a new style of trading cards up from "Down Under." These cards are super-thick, and the colors are practically blinding! *Pitt* creator Dale Keown did all original art for this set (with a little help from his friends), and the Pitt "MegaMotion" card was the first of its kind I'd ever seen. The set was a little pricey, but my mother always told me you get what you pay for. 'Course that was always when someone else was paying...

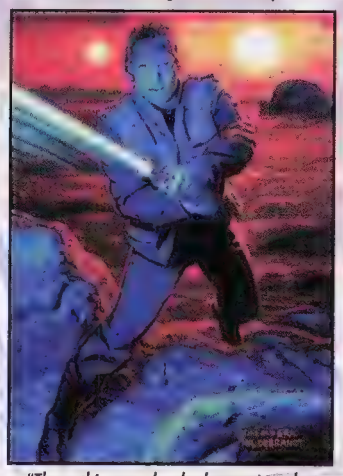
8. GEN^{13} '96
(Wildstorm Productions)

If you like the *Gen^{13}* comic series, and you liked last year's all-Chromium shindig, this set is a must-have. The art by J. Scott Campbell, Jim Lee, Terry Moore and Billy Tucci was, as usual, outstanding, and looks much better on premium-coated regular ol' card stock.

9. THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME
(Fleer/SkyBox)

Who could resist? It'd sound good to say this set is fun for little kids—period. But we've seen grown-ups having far too much fun with the build-a-tower cards for that.

"Hey Medusa, hows 'bout we play tune in Tokyo? Yeah I've had a few, why?"
Marvel Ultra: Onslaught from Fleer/Skybox



"These things make the best noise when you swing. Zoom...Zoooooom."
Topps' *Shadows of the Empire*

"This looks like a job for John Tesh!"
Superman Action Packs from Fleer/Skybox

10. THE JAMES BOND CONNOISSEUR'S COLLECTION
(Inkworks)
The first of this three-set series proves one thing: Sean Connery *is* James Bond.

Naturally, though, this list leaves quite a few good card series out in the cold. But wait! How about a round-up of honorable mentions in categories that best describe the special contribution these sets have made to the card collecting world this past year?

BEST CHROMIUM SET:
***Garfield* (Krome Productions)**
The best deadpan sense of humor around—*and* it comes from a cat. Figures.

COOLEST KID'S SET:
***Goosebumps* (Topps)**
It ain't Stephen King, but it's still freaky and entertaining.

BEST FANTASY ART SET:
***Joe Jusko's Colossal Cards II* (Friedlander Publishing Group)**
Jusko's among the best of all time, and Burroughs' Tarzan is the best work he's ever done.

BEST INDEPENDENT COMIC SET:
***Strangers in Paradise* (Comic Images)**
It's probably the best-written comic around, and the guest art in the set is *primo*.

FARTHEST-OUT SET:
***Beat Characters* (Kitchen Sink Press)**
In the age of never-ending superheroes, any series that celebrates a weird, decades-old poem like Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" has to count for something.

WARMEST, FUZZIEST SET:
***Coca-Cola Polar Bears South Pole Vacation* (Collect-A-Card)**
They're just the darnedest cutest things!

BEST FIRE PREVENTION SAFETY SET:
***Smokey the Bear* (Dart Flipcards)**
Okay, so it's the only fire prevention safety set. Sue me.

THE NEW YORK JETS OF CARD SETS:
***Barb Wire* (Topps)**
All talk and no action.

YEAR-ENDER HONORABLE MENTIONS

There were three sets I wish I coulda seen before writing this, so keeping in the tradition of lists, here's the best of December:

Marvel Masterpieces
(Fleer/Skybox)
...which, by the way, wins the "Contest of the Year" nod for its adaptation of the Willie Wonka "golden ticket" idea, giving away original Boris and Julie paintings to lucky collectors who find one of ten black-and-white Captain America cards. The 100-card series brims with solid new art by Vallejo and Bell, and features double-laminated, foil-stamped 20 pt. stock. In addition to the "Marvel at Your Own Masterpiece" cards, chase sets include a nine-card E-Motion set (1:5) and a three-card two-sided embossed set (1:8) (seven cards per pack, suggested retail $4.99 per pack).

Concrete (Dark Horse Comics)
Paul Chadwick's ink and watercolor creation is just plain gorgeous! The 50-card set is his first, and features art from the *Concrete* comic along with some of Chadwick's other works. A 16-card subset of art from this year's mini-series, *Concrete: Think Like a Mountain*, is also included. (No chase cards, one 50 card pack, suggested retail price $14.95)

Ash
(Dynamic Forces)

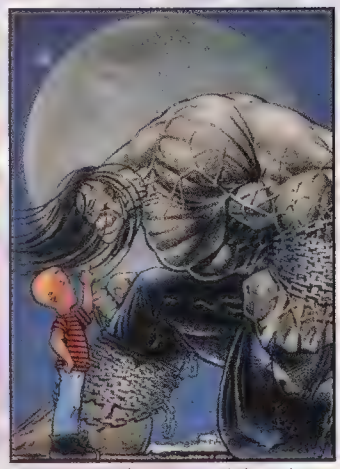
Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti are magic together, and it's about darn time this swell comic got a card series of its very own! The series promises 90 cards in the regular set, all printed on 24 pt. stock, with an array of chase cards including six Chromium cards and an Autographed card. Guest artists include Paul Chadwick, Rick Leonardi and a dozen others (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.89)!

That does it for '96, but 1997 is just around the corner, and all the card manufacturers have big plans in store for ya in the new year. 'Til then, here's wishing you a stocking full of foil packs and a new year full of "I-just-got-a-chase-card!" days!

*Joyce Steel can be found in the bleachers of Meadowlands Stadium rooting for the Jets. The Jets! Ha ha! Ho! Heh heh! Ha...*snicker*...*

"You fiend! I saw what you did to Beppo the Supermonkey! He'll never walk again!
Kingdom Come Extra from Fleer/Skybox

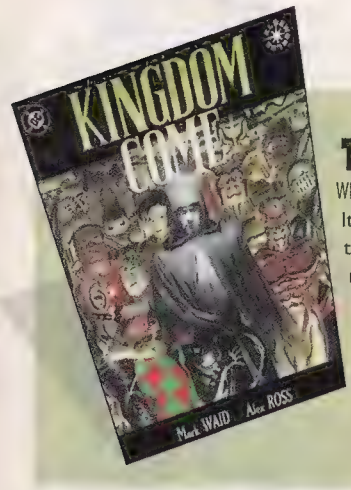
"Mr. Spock, I understand your going through Pon Farr, but for God's sake, they're only tribbles!"
Fleer/Skybox's *Thirty Years of Star Trek*



"What did I tell you about upper deckers, what?!?"
Intrepid's *Pitt* card series

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are November's hottest back issues.**

TOP 10 COMICS



1. KINGDOM COME #1

WRITER: Mark Waid ARTIST: Alex Ross

It had the Legion of Super-Pets. That's what amazes us most about *Kingdom Come*, the four-issue, beautifully painted mini-series that focused on the end of the DC Universe. Yeah, it had a neat story with megadramatic stuff like Superman kicking the demented Captain Marvel's ass, tremendous art that breathed life into DC's heroes and more hidden images in the art then you could shake Wendy and Marvin at, but what put it over the top was Beppo the Super-Monkey, Streaky the Super-Cat, Comet the Super-Horse and Krypto the Super-Puppy-Dog. Any comic that can stick those abominations in a book and get away with it is a sure sign of greatness.

2. WITCHBLADE #1

WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z. ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

D-Tron? One of the artists on this book is named D-Tron? What is he, one of the Micronauts? Regardless, the creative team behind one of the industry's hottest comics has got to be real proud these days, with *Witchblade* topping the sales and hot book charts. Following the exploits of Sara Pezzini—the gorgeous, intelligent mini-skirted cop with a big jagged iron gauntlet thingie that people from many generations have used before her and that can morph into all kinds of sharp, scary, blade-type weapons—*Witchblade* has proven to be a consistent fan-fave.

3. ONSLAUGHT: MARVEL UNIVERSE #1

WRITERS: Scott Lobdell and Mark Waid
ARTISTS: Adam Kubert and Joe Bennett

How about that Uatu, the Watcher, huh? Anytime he shows up, you know something big is gonna go down. Hey, for a guy who is not supposed to interfere in the affairs of humans, he sure has a habit of making them nervous. Think about it. Let's say you're out mowing the lawn and the Watcher is standing by your garage. You just know that getting your foot lopped off by the Snapper is probably the best thing that's gonna happen to you that day. And that's just what happens in *Onslaught: Marvel Universe*. Well, except for the part about you losing your foot on the lawn.

NUMBER THREE

NUMBER FOUR

4. PREACHER #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: Steve Dillon

Did you know that John Wayne didn't really die? Well, actually, he did. But his spirit lives on in Ennis and Dillon's *Preacher*. Hey, the "shootist" with "true grit" has been helping out our favorite holy man with an attitude, Jesse Custer, in his time of need. Which is pretty often, considering Jesse's hanging out with a friggin' vampire and a gun-wielding babe…and let's not forget about the unholy Saint of Killers that's gunning for the *padre*. Heck, with these characters, this book is funner than a dozen corpses of the Duke.

NUMBER FIVE

5. THE X-FILES #1

WRITER: Stefan Petrucha
ARTIST: Charles Adlard

In this still-hot issue, Elvis was discovered not only to be alive, but also to be an alien, living in the colon of agent Scully. Waitaminnit! That was the *original* plot. Once it was edited, it turned out that it wasn't Elvis at all. It turned out to be a chicken burrito infested with salmonella, but it was still alien nonetheless. However, this too was eventually edited out. It wasn't a chicken burrito in Scully's colon; it was a nun prophesying doom. Made for one cool, memorable story, too. See how editing works!

6. PREACHER #2

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: Steve Dillon

Déjà vu? Nope. *Preacher* is indeed in the top 10 twice. Go figure. Not only does this issue feature the evil Saint of Killers, the vulgar Sheriff Root and the master thespian John Wayne, but "you know who" makes his first appearance. Yes, of course, we're talking about Arseface, the ugliest guy in comics since the creation of all those damned goofy Dick Tracy villains. The main difference, however, is that while Arseface blew his face off, he still isn't as disturbing as that vile villain, Flattop. Yuck!

NUMBER SIX

NUMBER SEVEN

7. FANTASTIC FOUR #1

WRITERS: Jim Lee and Brandon Choi
ARTIST: Jim Lee

Four adventurers shot into space are bombarded by cosmic rays, then come crashing back to Earth with fantastic powers. No, we're not talkin' Stan Lee. We're talkin' *Jim* Lee. Heck, we're not putting down "The Man"—hell, no. But Jim Lee has taken the classic story we know so well and gave it some modern twists a la Image. No one comes close to the original Lee and King Kirby story, but Lee and his "Heroes Reborn" buddies have done okay. Now, if he could just work the same magic with the Katzenjammer Kids…ah, life would be good.

NUMBER EIGHT

8. WITCHBLADE #2

WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

How about that Ian Nottingham? Bad guy Kenneth Irons' number one assassin makes his second lethal appearance in this issue. Not only can Nottingham catch bullets, but he can also quickly and neatly cleave a car and a person in two with a sword. But does this make him a match for Sara Pezzini wielding the Witchblade? Ah…probably not. However, with a couple of large knives and some big spice shakers, he would make a damn good cook at one of those Japanese restaurants. Just keep your fingers out of the way, 'kay?

9. HITMAN #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: John McCrea

Let's compare Hitman with the Fall Guy, shall we? While Tommy Monaghan has telepathic abilities and X-ray vision, Lee Majors, while he got to hang with major babe Heather Thomas, only wished he had X-ray vision. While Hitman's fought heavies like the Mawzir, the Joker and Shadow-Force, the Fall Guy's enemies were usually hairy bikers. FG was a stuntman that moonlighted as a bounty hunter and always peacefully brought villains to justice. However, Hitman is a poker-playing meta-assassin who shoots up everything in sight with reckless abandon. Having compared the two, we can see why Hitman has a Top 10 comic and "The Fall Guy" was canceled.

NUMBER NINE

10. ONSLAUGHT: X-MEN #1

WRITERS: Scott Lobdell and Mark Waid
ARTISTS: Adam Kubert and Dan Green

Okay, so Professor X was not really responsible for his actions as Onslaught. And Magneto became a good guy…again. But despite these rather cliché turns of events, *Onslaught: X-Men* has the formula for a damn good read. First, the two scribes, Lobdell and Waid (who ties Garth Ennis for having three books in the Top 10), give you one mean mega-mutant mayhem-filled magazine. And with the artistic prowess of Adam Kubert and Dan Green, how could this book get any better?

NUMBER TEN

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. DAWN #1 SIRIUS
12. WOLVERINE #100 MARVEL
13. SHI #1 CRUSADE
14. SPAWN #1 IMAGE
15. DC VERSUS MARVEL #1 DC/MARVEL
16. SHI #2 CRUSADE
17. STRANGERS IN PARADISE #1 HOMAGE
18. VINGLANCE OF VAMPIRELLA #1 HARRIS
19. ANGELA #1 IMAGE
20. SPAWN #9 IMAGE

byte this

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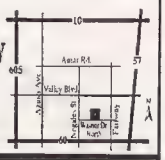

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FEBRUARY '97

WIZARD TOP 100

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of OCTOBER.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by comic book retailers across the country, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for October. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's standout books (listed in **boldface type**). **(CE=Collector's Edition)**

1. X-Men #59 (Marvel)

2. Uncanny X-Men #339 (Marvel)
3. Wolverine #108 (Marvel)
4. **Spawn "The Impaler" #1 (Image)**
5. **Fantastic Four #2 (Marvel)**
6. **Spawn #55 (Image)**
7. **DC/Marvel: All Access #1 (DC/Mar.)**
8. **Iron Man #2 (Marvel)**
9. Generation X #22 (Marvel)
10. **Curse of the Spawn #2 (Image)**
11. **Captain America #2 (Marvel)**
12. **Avengers #2 (Marvel)**
13. X-Man #22 (Marvel)
14. X-Force #61 (Marvel)
15. **Peter Parker: Spider-Man #75 (Marvel)**
16. X-Men Unlimited #13 (Marvel)
17. X-Factor #129 (Marvel)
18. Cable #38 (Marvel)
19. **Gen[13] #14 (Image)**
20. **Witchblade #10 (Top Cow)**
21. Magneto #2 (Marvel)
22. Amazing Spider-Man #418 (Marvel)
23. X-Men: The Rise of Apocalypse #3 (Marvel)
24. **Sabretooth & Mystique #1 (Marvel)**
25. Excalibur #104 (Marvel)
26. Spectacular Spider-Man #241 (Marvel)
27. Sensational Spider-Man #11 (Marvel)
28. **X.S.E. #2 (Marvel)**
29. **Tales of the Witchblade #1 (Top Cow)**
30. **Lady Death: The Crucible #1 (Chaos!)**
31. Incredible Hulk #448 (Marvel)
32. **Elektra #2 (Marvel)**
33. **Green Lantern #81 CE (DC)**
34. Star Wars: S. of the Empire #6 (D.H.)
35. The X-Files #23 (Topps)
36. **Batman #537 (DC)**
37. DarkChylde/Glory (Image)
38. **Supergirl #4 (DC)**
39. WildC.A.T.s #33 (Image)
40. Venom: Tooth & Claw #1 (Marvel)
41. DarkChylde/Avengelyne (Maximum)
42. S. Wars: T. of the Jedi–G.A.S. #1 (D.H.)
43. Detective Comics #704 (DC)
44. **Batman: The Long Halloween #1 (DC)**
45. Superman #118 (DC)
46. Journey into Mystery #504 (Marvel)
47. **Nightwing #3 (DC)**
48. The X-Files: Season One #4 (Topps)
49. Spider-Man Unlimited #14 (Marvel)
50. Spider-Man: Redemption #4 (Marvel)
51. Abominations #1 (Marvel)
52. **Crypt of Dawn #1 (Sirius)**
53. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #57 (DC)
54. **Superman/W. Woman: W. Gods Destroy #1 (DC)**
55. Batman: Leg. of the Dark Knight #89 (DC)
56. Robin #36 (DC)
57. **Preacher #20 (DC)**
58. **Preacher Special: Story of Y.K.W. #1 (DC)**
59. **Spider-Man Team-Up #5 (Marvel)**
60. Batman: Death of Innocents #1 (DC)
61. The Flash #120 (DC)
62. **Robin Plus #1 (DC)**
63. Catwoman #40 (DC)
64. What If? #92 (Marvel)
65. L. Death & The Women of C. Gallery #1 (Chaos!)
66. **World's Finest: Superboy & Robin #1 (DC)**
67. Untold Tales of Spider-Man '96 (Marvel)
68. Shi: Kaidan #1 (Crusade)
69. Untold Tales of Spider-Man #16 (Marvel)
70. Wonder Woman #116 (DC)
71. Star Trek: Starfleet Academy #1 (Marvel)
72. **Green Lantern Plus #1 (DC)**
73. The Dreaming #7 (DC)
74. WetWorks #22 (Image)
75. Cyberforce #28 (Top Cow)
76. Marvel Fanfare #4 (Marvel)
77. Daily Bugle #1 (Marvel)
78. Silver Surfer #123 (Marvel)
79. Professor X and the X-Men #14 (Marvel)
80. Batman: Gordon's Law #1 (DC)
81. Avengelyne #0 (Maximum)
82. Azrael #24 (DC)
83. Daredevil #359 (Marvel)
84. Star Trek: Voyager #2 (Marvel)
85. **Angels of Destruction (Marvel)**
86. Astro City (Vol. 2) #3 (Homage)
87. Star Trek: Deep Space Nine #2 (Marvel)
88. Teen Titans #3 (DC)
89. **Azrael Plus #1 (DC)**
90. Superboy #34 (DC)
91. Wonder Woman Annual #5 (DC)
92. 2099: World of Tomorrow #4 (Marvel)
93. Black Knight: Exodus (Marvel)
94. Weapon Zero #8 (Top Cow)
95. Backlash #25 (Image)
96. Impulse #20 (DC)
97. Hitman #9 (DC)
98. Superman Adventures #2 (DC)
99. Aquaman #27 (DC)
100. Glory/Celestine: Dark Angel #2 (Image)

AT THE TOP:

While the mutant books still hold a good chunk of the top 25, there's a breath of fresh market air breezing through that section, including the "Heroes Reborn" titles (with Jim Lee's *FF* and *Iron Man* offerings in the lead, and Liefeld's pair right behind), the latest DC/Marvel crossover (something fans clamored for) and two new Spawn books (the *Curse* title and *Impaler*, the first fully painted book from McFarlane and Image). Also, this month's Clone Saga *denouement* issue, *Peter Parker: Spider-Man #75*, had fairly explosive—albeit slightly less than expected—sales. Unfortunately for *Gen[13]*, though, all these books busted the title's top 10 bubble. While Marvel's *Sabretooth & Mystique* fared well, its *X.S.E.* sank from September's #8 ranking, proving again that mini-series-buying retailers usually only take risks with #1 issues. Thanks to Top Cow's separation from Image ending its distributor exclusivity, *Witchblade* hit a very high ranking, and the *Tales* spinoff was also well-ordered, all without Image's solicitation help. This issue's "Market Watch" tells the good and bad news about the Cow's "coming home."

IN THE MIDDLE:

The orders for Lady Death's latest first issue were not only solid, but very consistent with March's #30 placement for *The Odyssey* #1—her fans are still out there. Marvel has a new hit with *Elektra*; her Wolverine connection and Mike Deodato Jr. art are two reasons. The funeral of Hal Jordan gave *Green Lantern* a strong sales push, and may help the book's future interest. The regularly rising *Supergirl* has been inching up on the steadfast *Batman*. The Dark Knight's *Halloween* did pretty darn well for a $4.95 book, as *Nightwing* had a nine-point jump; word-of-mouth may've contributed to the latter's accomplishment.

IN THE SECOND HALF:

Not actually a Dawn book, Sirius' *Crypt of Dawn* did fair enough for an anthology series. The *Superman/WW* Elseworlds book and *Preacher Special* came in at the standard area for $4.95 issues, as the regular, increasingly hot *Preacher* title hit the #50s. A visit from Gambit brought *Spider-Man Team-Up* closer to its original high numbers. *Robin Plus* was not only the most successful of DC's first trio of team-up specials, but it also beat out the more expensive (and more anticipated) *World's Finest* book. A cover by the famous fantasy artist Hajime Sorayama gave sales life to the ex-Malibu heroine book *Angels of Destruction*.

ATTENTION COMIC BOOK RETAILERS:

If you're a retailer who would like to participate in our compiling of the *Wizard* Top 100 (and be a candidate for special prizes), please write to us at the address below.

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MARKET WATCH

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH · by Jon Warren and the *Wizard* staff

WITCHBLADE LOSES OUT

Marc Silvestri's Top Cow studio is back at Image. But is that a good thing?

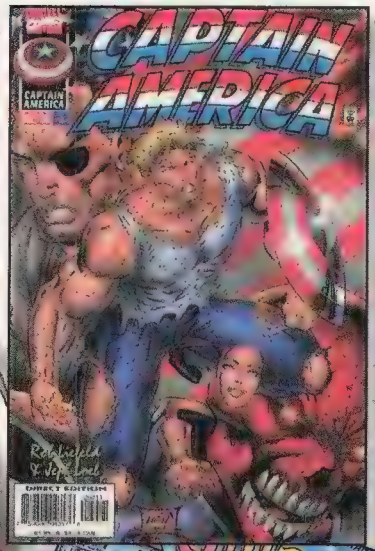
Silvestri's independent-of-Image Top Cow Comics published *Witchblade* #10, which ranked at #6 on Diamond Comics Distributors' outside-of-Marvel sales chart. Sounds impressive, but sources inside Top Cow indicate that *Witchblade* #10 sold an additional 30,000 copies through other distributors (since the Image-less Top Cow is not exclusive to one distributor), resulting in an extra sales boost. Now Top Cow stands to lose those extra bucks once its books are back under the Image umbrella in January. It's interesting to see how a positive move on the surface could have a slightly negative effect. And how distributor exclusivity can decrease sales.

"Heroes Reborn" a Success

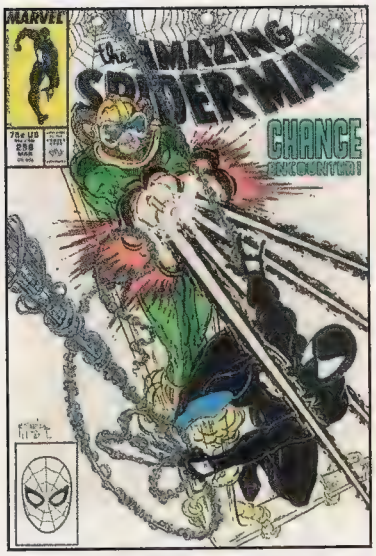
Though "Heroes Reborn" began as a moderate success, it has quickly turned into a sure-fire hit for retailers. According to sources inside Marvel, all the third issues of each of the four "Heroes Reborn" series (*Fantastic Four*, *Captain America*, *Iron Man* and *Avengers*) have sold better than the second issues, which in turn sold better than the first issues.

This bucks the current trend of having #2 issues worth more in the back-issue market than the #1 issues. In recent times, #2 issues have been ordered in smaller quantities than #1 issues, thereby making them scarcer and effectively more expensive than the first issues in comic shop boxes and at convention tables. Dark Horse's *Ghost in the Shell* #2, which is worth more than the first issue, is a good example of this.

So in the future, if any of the "Heroes Reborn" issues spark back-issue interest, it would be logical that the first issues, being the rarer of the bunch, would increase in value faster.



At left: Witchblade stands to lose by rejoining Image
At right: "Heroes Reborn" sales increase by the issue



Spidey hopes Marvel's new "back to basics" approach applies to his back-issue sales

Survey Says...

Retailer Bobby Flessel of New York asked, "I don't understand why you call some books 'hot' when they don't sell very well at all—do you just pick books at random or what?" We get detailed reports from retailers all over the United States on what's selling in their stores—there's nothing random about it. Some books sell better or worse in different areas. For instance, by percentage, independents sell better in urban areas, big publishers better in rural areas. Just because a book doesn't find an audience in your town (or even at your local shop), that doesn't mean it's a bad buy. It could be selling great elsewhere. One of the services *Wizard* provides is to put collectors in touch with what's going on in other parts of the country, and in this column particularly, to try to tip you onto what books are hot and getting hot while they're still available at a reasonable price.

Can Spidey Bounce Back?

After a long stretch of heat, various Spider-Man back issues are stone cold. Included in the bunch are *Amazing Spider-Man* #149-#151 (the introduction/"death" of the infamous Spider-Clone), and issues #298-#299 (the first two issues drawn by Todd McFarlane).

One can only hope that Marvel's current "back to basics" campaign will get the web-slinger on track again, pushing back-issue sales to where they were three years ago.

Jon Warren is still available at a reasonable price.

Wizard's Top 10 Hottest Writers

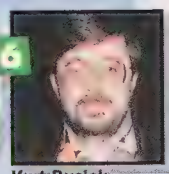
1 **Garth Ennis**
Preacher, Hitman

2 **Mark Waid**
Flash, X-O Manowar

Al Ortego
3 **Peter David**
Hulk, Aquaman

Al Ortego
4 **Neil Gaiman**
Sandman

J. Schuyler
5 **Scott Lobdell**
Generation X, Uncanny X-Men


6 **Kurt Busiek**
Astro City, Untold Tales of Spidey

Al Ortego
7 **Karl Kesel**
Daredevil

J. Schuyler
8 **Ron Marz**
Green Lantern, Superboy

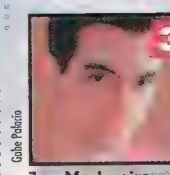
Al Ortego
9 **James Robinson**
Starman, Leave it to Chance

10 **Chuck Dixon**
Robin, Green Arrow

Wizard's Top 10 Hottest Artists

Al Ortego
1 **Todd McFarlane**
Spawn

Al Ortego
2 **Jim Lee**
Fantastic Four

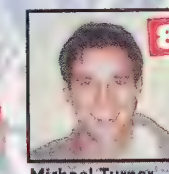

Gabe Peluccio
3 **Joe Madureira**
Uncanny X-Men

4 **J. Scott Campbell**
Gen13

Al Ortego
5 **Alex Ross**
Kingdom Come

6 **Joe Quesada**
Ash

Al Ortego
7 **Billy Tucci**
Shi


8 **Michael Turner**
Witchblade

9 **Humberto Ramos**
Impulse; upcoming: Ash

10 **Mike Wieringo**
Sensational Spider-Man

***Wizard*'s Top Ten Hottest Writers and Artists lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey.**

Wizard's Up & Coming Creator

HOWARD PORTER

This *JLA* artist's work has improved tenfold since his *Ray* and *Underworld Unleashed* stints, and his current assignment couldn't be a better showcase. Porter is making the most of his tour on *JLA*, making all the iconic DC characters stand out. His pacing is an excellent complement to the scripts of *JLA* writer Grant Morrison, and he has a flair for tense action scenes.

JLA editor Ruben Diaz says, "I like the way he incorporates traditional storytelling and stylistics with contemporary influences. He always finds new ways to present the conventions of the storytelling medium. I love his Batman splash page in issue #3." (You will, too. So check it out.) ■ *Marc Wilkofsky*

survey: issue 65

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & CONCERNS

We want to know what you like about this li'l mag of ours. Tell us what you thought about this particular issue of *WIZARD*, what you liked best, and what sucked sour frog ass. (Use extra paper if you're one of them long-winded types.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

PRICE CHANGES

Are books selling in your area for a lot more or a lot less than *WIZARD* is listing them at?
If they are, we wanna know. List any major discrepancies you feel exist in the *WIZARD* price guide.
(Use extra paper if necessary.)

Title	Issue #	What it sells for in your area

TOP TEN HOTTEST COMICS

What do you see as the hottest comics among the circle of friends you hang out with? List them below, with the hottest book at the number one slot.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS

Who is your favorite comic book artist? Actually, we wanna know who your top 10 favorite artists are. List your favorite artist in the number one slot, followed by your second favorite artist, etc.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS

Hang in there; we're almost done. What we need now is the list of your 10 favorite comic book writers.
You know the drill: your favorite in pole position, with your second favorite at number two, yadda, yadda, yadda.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

let your voice be heard

WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

We need your help. Y'see, the only way to keep improving the WIZARD price guide is to keep in touch with the thousands of comic book fans that make this industry what it is. So, we need you to take a couple of minutes and fill out the survey on the left and mail this page to us. And heck, by helping us make a better mag, you'll *get* a better mag! (See? It all works out in the end.) Oh, and feel free to photocopy this page if you don't feel like destroying this issue.

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City State

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Zip Age

_____
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BULL PEN

Former Mort of the Month Knodar welcomes you to the Miscellaneous *Wizard* Fun Section

C.B.I.Q.

Games, puzzles and stuff that'll tickle your tummy with the taste of nuts and honey

comic book intelligence quotient

As 1996 rolls to a close and the holiday season is fast upon us, we thought it best to grade this month's '96-stuff-filled CBIQ against what comicdom's most vile and unpleasant supervillains were wishing for in their Christmas stockings. The higher your score, the more special the gift.

Score	Rank
0-4	**Titano the Super-Ape:** Another big monkey (he's been having these…urges)
5-14	**Red Skull:** A stick with a nail in it and a batch of those li'l swastika sugar cookies the Fuhrer used to make
15-19	**Galactus:** A Dyson Sphere ("Mmmm…tasty!")
20	**Dr. Doom:** A pony

1. In Jim Lee's version of the Fantastic Four, who is behind the hijacking of Reed Richards' prototype spaceship, the *Excelsior*?
A) S.H.I.E.L.D.
B) Dr. Doom
C) The Red Ghost
D) That damn sissy-boy Dr. Smith. We just wanna hear him scream, "Oh dear, oh dear!" when we run a tent stake through his pancreas.

2. What rock musician or group did not make a cameo appearance as some sort of superpowered freak(s) in *Kingdom Come*?
A) Elvis
B) Kiss
C) Steve Miller
D) The Village People

3. Witchblade's favorite TV cop or cop team is:
A) Cagney and Lacey
B) Baretta
C) Starsky and Hutch
D) Hildy Granger, Suzanne Somers' character from "She's the Sheriff"

4. What the heck does Shi mean in Japanese?
A) "spirit"
B) "warrior"
C) "death"
D) "Hello, you have a lovely monkey. May I use your toilet?"

5. What junk food connoisseur did Grunge do a crossover hamburgerfest with in *Gen*[13] #13A?
A) Wimpy
B) Andy Capp
C) Jughead
D) One of the Cavity Creeps

6. What caused the sun to cease its solar functions in DC's *The Final Night*?
A) A wormhole created by Darkseid to steal our sun's energy.
B) An energy drain was caused when Parallax siphoned power from the sun to recreate his destroyed hometown.
C) A creature known only as "The Sun-Eater" entered our solar system and consumed the sun's energy as nourishment.
D) Hank Henshaw, a.k.a. the Cyborg, extinguished the sun (the source of Superman's powers) to weaken Supes.

7. What did Herr Starr do to the vampire, Cassidy, when he found out that he wasn't the preacher Jesse Custer?
A) Cassidy's arms were shot off and then he was dissected.
B) Three cloves of garlic were shoved in his mouth, which was then sewed shut with silver-laced thread.
C) A stake made from Jesus' cross was hammered through his heart.
D) Holy water was injected into his bloodstream.

8. What was the name of the one person who was the focal point of the Marvel and DC universes?
A) Excess
B) Access
C) Keymaster
D) Peppe, the foul-tempered Greek proctologist with a nervous "trigger" finger

9. What is the new Dr. Octopus' connection to the late Dr. Seward Trainer?
A) Psycho ex-wife.
B) Rebellious daughter.
C) Degenerating clone.
D) She's the offspring of Trainer and the hermaphroditic original Doc Ock (mmm…fat hermaphrodites).

10. During the "Contagion" Bat-storyline, what was the name of the complex where the decadently rich lived, worked, played and barricaded themselves in, during the Clench outbreak?
A) Babylon Towers
B) Gamorra Heights
C) Masada Plaza
D) Wizard Press

11. Where did the Avengers find Thor in Liefeld's "Heroes Reborn" version of Earth's Mightiest Heroes?
A) He was found in shackled to Yggdrasil, the World Tree.
B) He was found in a cave, encased in enchanted amber.
C) He was found in an alley in the form of a battered and lame Dr. Donald Blake.
D) Weeping in a dark room, clutching early-'80s Marvel comics to his chest and wondering aloud how everything could go so wrong in just a few short years.

12. What did Lois Lane do when she realized how tough it would be to work with Clark Kent after she called off their engagement?
A) She tried to get Clark fired from his job at the *Daily Planet*.
B) She quit her job and become a WGBS reporter.
C) She became a foreign correspondent for the *Planet*.
D) She took over Editor Perry White's job when he was diagnosed with cancer and immediately fired Clark's yellow sun-powered ass.

13. In *Strangers in Paradise*, when Katchoo first met David at the art museum, what did she leave on a Rodin sculpture of two lovers in the throes of passion, as a commentary?
A) a condom
B) a container of spermicidal gel
C) a big can of whipped cream
D) a used tampon

15. Who's the leader of the newest Teen Titans?
A) Superboy
B) Green Arrow
C) the Atom
D) Robin

16. In the past year, Gen[13] did not team up with:
A) Deathblow
B) Archie Andrews and friends
C) WildC.A.T.s
D) Pitt

17. The Amalgam Universe's Speed Demon was a combo of three characters. Who were they?
A) Flash, Etrigan and Ghost Rider
B) Impulse, Gargoyle and Johnny Blaze
C) The Whizzer, the Spectre and Blue Devil
D) Devil Dinosaur, Slyde (The first Teflon hero!) and that green lobster thing from the *Fallen Angels* mini-series.

18. This li'l robot blew his lid minutes after being sold to the Skywalker family in "Star Wars":
A) Power Droid
B) R5-D5
C) IG-88
D) Frank

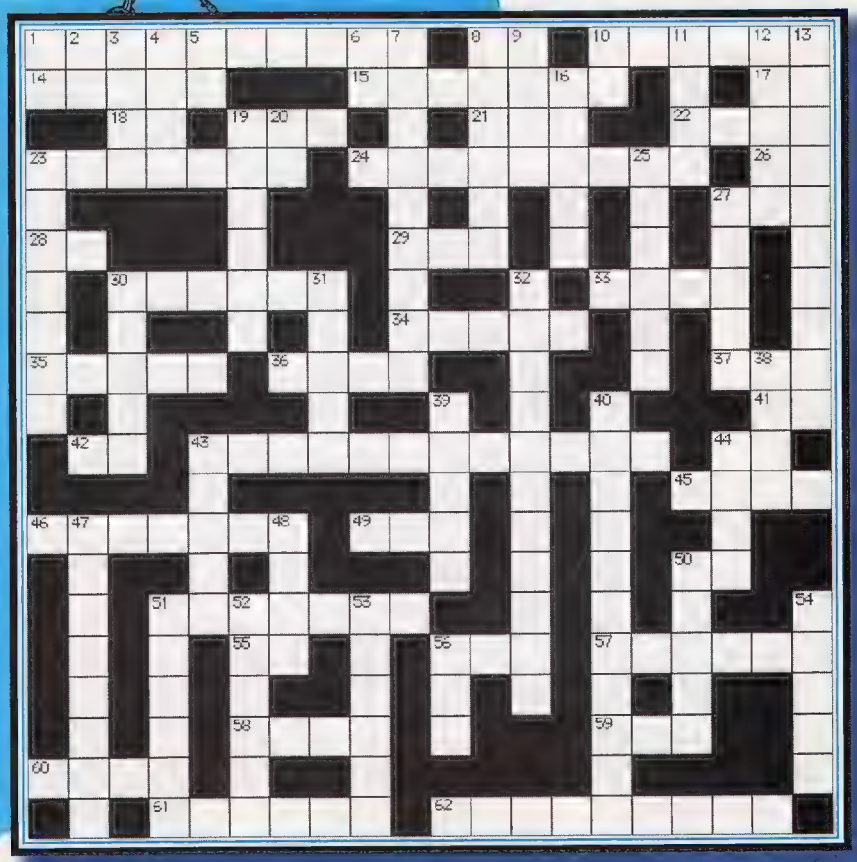
19. On what condition did Daredevil's alter ego, Matthew Murdock, accept Rosalind Sharpe's offer to join her fancy-schmancy law firm?
A) Murdock is never to defend any known supervillains in a court of law.
B) Karen Page, DD's gal pal, is to be his personal secretary.
C) Foggy Nelson must also be allowed to join the firm.
D) That somebody would make sure the lid to the men's room toilet was always down, 'cause that water's pretty damn cold!

20. How did the heroes of Marvel end the presence of its evil cash cow Onslaught?
A) They entered his energy form and drained his power from within.
B) Several Marvel heroes (including the Avengers and the FF) sacrificed themselves as conduits for the combined mental powers of Jean Grey and Psylocke.
C) Dr. Strange teleported Onslaught to another plane of reality, inadvertently teleporting several Marvel heroes as well.
D) They confronted Onslaught with well-thought-out, well-written comic stories, a concept that drove him mad.

WIZARD CROSSWORD

you know, across, down, that sort of stuff

TOO TOUGH?
Don't cry.
The answers are on page 263.



ACROSS

1. Sunless DC Universe crossover
8. Ex-*Spectacular Spider-Man* artist; initials
10. Where the FF got their powers
14. Asgardian Enchantress
15. *Witchblade* artist; ____ Turner
17. Bart Sears' inker; init.
18. New *Legionnaires* writer; init.
19. Nightcreeper's team
21. *Pryde ___ Wisdom*
22. a surviving Malibu character
23. tried to re-adamantiumize Wolvie
24. the true Spider-Clone
26. *Strangers __ Paradise*
27. Ashley Quinn has two of these
28. Barda's husband; init.
29. "Hulk" toon writer, ___ Wein
30. forgot he was Captain America
33. Linsner's Bad Girl
34. *Supergirl*'s writer
35. WildC.A.T. Ladytron is partly this
36. *Marvel Heroes & Legends'* _____ Colan
37. Dark Horse's O'Brien
41. Bought out Stark; init.
42. Acclaim's new editor-in-chief; init.
43. 51 across' archetypal hero
44. Dark Horse's *Cross* writer; init.
45. Starman's city
46. Image hard guy, met Wolverine
49. Villain; synonym
50. Terrax's weapon
51. DC and Marvel's combo world
55. *Action Comics'* lettercol title "__: Action"
56. "New" Asgardian comic book; init.
57. Highfather gave him powers
58. Indy comic with Buddy Bradley
59. Areala's profession
60. Hercules' belligerent brother
61. Belonging to Dr. John Irons
62. Bat-storyline with Clench

DOWN

1. 1996 hardcover reprinting Flash stories; init.
2. a reborn hero; init.
3. Karnilla, the ___ Queen
4. Sheriff Root's son has a face like this
5. Avengers West Coast town; init.
6. wrote Spider-Clone's death; init.
7. Avengers' Kang plotline
8. Cap's ex-babe who returned
9. Bat-villain who returned
10. "Heroes Reborn" creator; init.
11. New *Daredevil* artist; _____ Nord
12. Horror guy, turns 5 this December
13. The Atom is their leader
16. What Brian Augustyn now does for Event
19. Reworked *Iron Man* and *FF*
20. Writes *Superman: The Man of Steel*; init.
23. "Fire From Heaven" happened here
25. Pyro revealed he has this virus
27. *Body Bags* chick
30. Had Clench plague and met Wildcat
31. 53 down's artist, _____ Ellis
32. Alex Ross' dark DC future
38. He returned to New Warriors
39. Shi is this type of warrior
40. Married Lex Luthor
43. Wild, Sue or Johnny
44. Squadron Supreme's simian foe
47. They disappeared after "Onslaught"
48. Hooked up with Donna Troy again
50. Polemachus resident
51. He can go from DC to Marvel
52. Riverdale's redhead who met Grunge
53. Crusade's new team book *Atomik* ___
54. *Hitman, Preacher* writer
56. Morrison brought this team back

TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1) WITCHBLADE

Hey, knock it off already with the surprised look on yer kisser, Sara. Dress like you do to an audience of overly hormonal teens and it's no surprise that you're as popular as you are. The real surprise is that you're not wrasslin' for your life against a horde of salivating fanboys wantin' to pick at that scabby-lookin' armor that's growin' all over your bod. You'd better learn all the ins and outs of that kooky magical Witchblade of yours before you're overrun by your growing base of marginally pubescent fans.

2) WOLVERINE

We just don't get it. How could anyone prefer the occasionally noseless, de-evolved, pirate mask Wolverine to the nasally unimpaired, classic yellow-&-blue, man-battling-to-keep-his-inner-demons-in-check version? It just goes to show that even with all these...unique changes (including the de-adamantiumizing of the li'l guy, which reminds us: BRING BACK THE DAMN ADAMANTIUM ALREADY!), Wolvie is an incredibly strong comic character with a tremendously strong fan-base.

3) SPAWN

Kellogg's new Frosted Spawn–Flakes? Nah. It's just the much-ballyhooed, not-that-different kisser they slapped on Spawny-Guy back in issue #50. Quite the bum rap, eh? When they change Batman a little, he gets slightly darker duds. When they change Superman, he just gets longer hair. Spider-Man, they just...uh...bad example. So while other heroes get cosmetic changes, Spawn goes to Hell, has his body and soul twisted about and then gets his face boiled white. Yeah, life's fair.

4) FAIRCHILD

Considered by many as the best Image book being published, *Gen13* owes a lot of its success to the female members of the group: Freefall, Rainmaker and our redheaded, screaming pal Fairchild here. Aside from the standard tight costumes and T&A shots, they're take-charge ladies who play a much larger role in the stories than the typical, "Eeek! Cap'n Baddin's tied me to a deflowering machine! Help meeee!" That, and Fairchild breaks Marvel's Scarlet Witch, Jean Grey and Mary Jane Parker monopoly on hot comic book redheads.

5) BATMAN

Yeah...that's pretty much how we think George Clooney'll look when he takes on Arnold in the next Bat-flick. That is if he can even *find* Arnold in that movie. He's gotta wade through FIVE new characters being introduced? There's Poison Ivy, Batgirl, Bane, Elle Macpherson's character (we're hoping she'll be "Skip-Rope-Nekkid Lass") and the aforementioned Freeze. How do they expect to tell a neat superhero story with that many people jammed in the flick?

6) SPIDER-MAN

Heeey...Spidey actually moved up from last month's rating. Think maybe it has something to do with somebody at Marvel waking up and realizing that replacing Peter Parker with the blonde clone Ben Reilly, changing his costume and removing his supporting cast betrayed the fans that had stayed with the books for years? Could be. What they gotta do now is inject a LOT of the light-hearted humor that's Spidey's trademark back into the book.

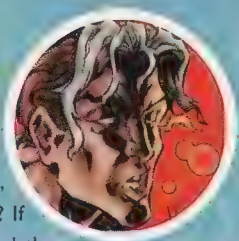
7) SUPERMAN

If Supes looks a little mystified as to why the new animated "Superman" series would be showing reruns two weeks into the show's life, he ain't the only one. With only two options of watching the Man of Steel on TV, the animated show and that God-awful "Lois & Clark" crap (Hey, you can only stare at Teri Hatcher so long before you begin *hearing* her dialogue.), you'd think they'd be a tad more considerate and have some newer episodes ready.

8) DAWN

Dawn's a pretty good book. Don't instantly think that just 'cause it's got some Bad Girl runnin' around with 40 extra pounds of silicon, that it's all just flash. For the most part, it's an entertaining story on some kinda funky power struggle between the not-so-terribly pleasant forces of Hell and the also-not-so-terribly pleasant forces of Heaven. How Dawn (the watery-mascaraed chick whose part in the goings-on we can't really figure out) fits in, is anybody's guess.

9) X-MAN



If the "Age of Apocalypse" was undone so reality went back to the way it should be, then how the hell do characters like the Dark Beast, Holocaust and X-Man here exist? If everything that made them was erased, then how could they be here now? Odd? Yes. But there's no questioning that, as difficult as it may be piecing together the hows and whys of this book, fandom seems to dig this feller pretty hard.

10) GAMBIT

Lookin' like he just took a low blow with a wiffle ball bat ("Dat stung somethun' fierce, mon ami"), Remy LeBeau, better known as the X-Man Gambit, slips a notch this month. Even with a soap opera-ish romance with fellow X-Man Rogue, the constant battling with the mystifyingly young Magneto and his inability to ever appear cleanshaven, it appears this shifty Cajun just ain't as hot as he used to be.

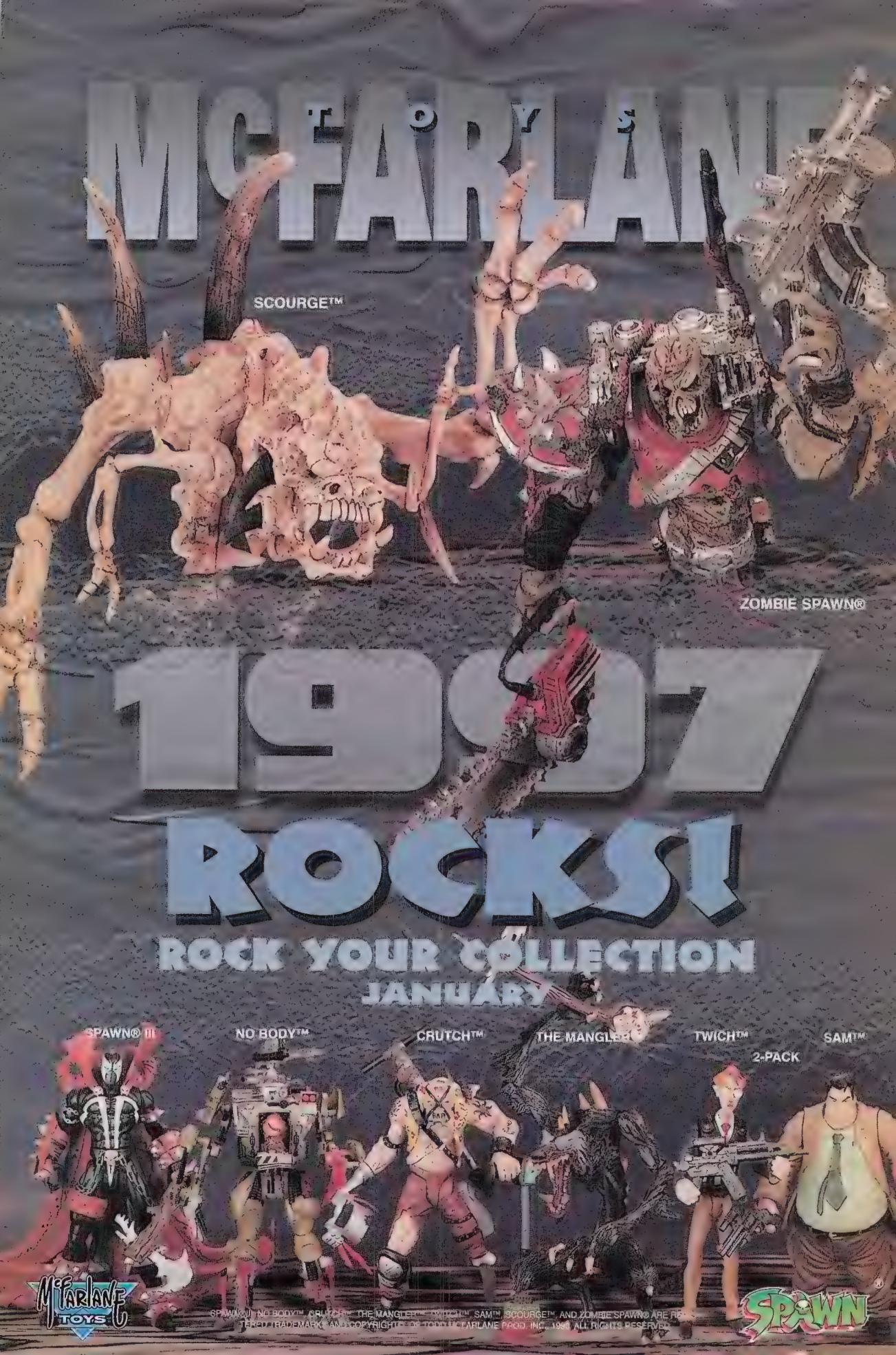
MORT OF THE MONTH

Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

KITE-MAN

A supervillain based on kites is pretty tough to pull off. Toss in a green costume, a yellow crash helmet with a kite painted on the forehead and the villain's real name (Charles Brown? Geez, was his arch-nemesis the Kite-Eating Tree?), and it's nigh-impossible. But hey, this is pre-Crisis DC we're talking about here. So, proving you shouldn't take a double-dose of NyQuil before creating characters, the kitester's powers were that he could hang glide *really* well. That's it. No neat magical powers, animal sidekick or action-stick, just Charlie, his kite and a dream.

MORTOMETER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DENNY O'NEIL

EDITOR'S NOTE: To mark the passing of Marvel editor Mark Gruenwald, *Wizard* turned to longtime friend and colleague Denny O'Neil, who offered this fond remembrance.

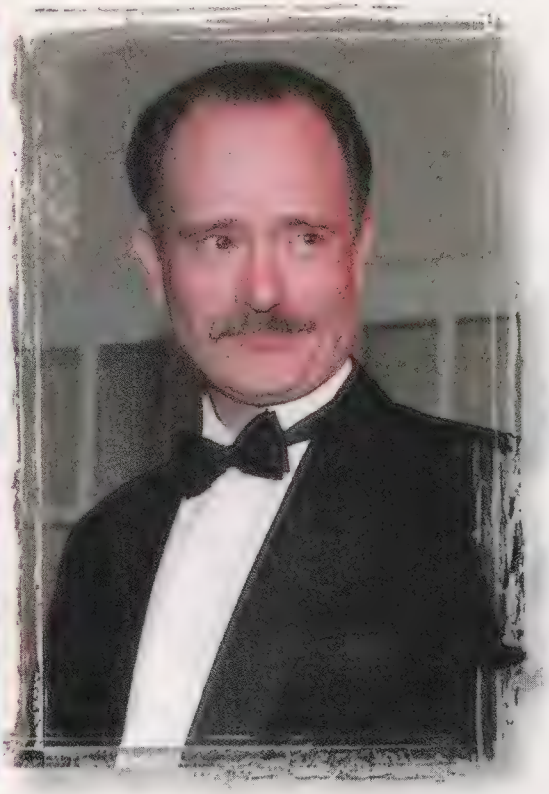
SPECIAL YEAR-ENDER

GUEST COLUMN

IN MEMORIAM: MARK GRUENWALD (1953-1996)

Although I doubt that Mark Gruenwald ever set foot in a Buddhist temple—except perhaps as a tourist—he almost perfectly exemplified one of Buddhism's central tenets, expressed in the maxim: *Be here now.*

More than anyone I know, Mark lived in the moment—fully, without hesitation and merrily. Oh yes, merrily. Mark believed in fun. And when he couldn't find it, he made it. He organized or created games, jokes, outings, pranks and stunts that were sometimes hilariously surrealistic and sometimes close to spooky. A party for any occasion. Anything for a laugh. And if he couldn't get a laugh, he'd settle for a raised eyebrow or a puzzled glaze. Among his favorite entertainments were the "Three Stooges" shorts, on one hand, and on the other, the Zatoichi films from Japan which, despite their copious bloodletting, are bleakly humorous at the core. If it was silly, goofy or simply a twisted grin at the cruelties of our mortal condition, Mark cherished it.



He wasn't *always* laughing. Twice, when he lectured to classes I was teaching, I saw him talk earnestly for hours about the building, care and maintenance of fictional universes, a subject on which he was equally earnest regarding other aspects of his profession. He loved comics, was proud to be a part of them and believed they were worthy of his—and anyone else's—best effort. So sure, he could be serious, but he was never solemn, much less pompous, pretentious or self-important. Like his legion of other enthusiasms, comics were— finally—an occasion of joy for him.

That capacity for locating the joyous made Mark a happy man, one of the few I've ever known. It wasn't that life had always been particularly kind to him. He took some hard shots and, once or twice, admitted discouragement. But in the grim hours, he found some alchemy of courage and optimism and refused to pity himself. He simply did what had to be done, gracefully and without complaint. There are worse ways to be human.

In recent years, I was not able to see him often, but when I did, I anticipated the meetings eagerly and I never left his company disappointed. Our relationship began with Mark as my assistant and *de facto* student, and ended with *my* learning from him. Almost certainly, he taught me about my craft—the work we did together benefited substantially from contributions he refused to take credit for. But more importantly, he gave me lessons in honor, perseverance and decency.

He was enormously important to me—much more than I understood—until, suddenly, he was gone. At first, I wondered if the rumor of his death was a joke, another wacky Gruenwald caper. Later, after the rumor was confirmed, I realized that if there was a joke, it was a cosmic one. *Mark dead?* Running, climbing, cavorting Mark? At 43? It had an absurdity that verged on the whimsical. But I wasn't smiling. Nobody was. Because it was true and it was forever.

I've thought of him often these last couple of months, particularly late at night, sitting alone in the yard after the day's chores were done and the shadows seemed a bit longer and colder than they were all the nights before. I expect to think of him occasionally for however long I have left, with profound disappointment that I can no loner share moments with such a splendid companion, but with gratitude too. I thank him for the merriment and the teaching, for being able to share his enthusiasms, for showing me how to find and appreciate the satisfaction that can fill every ordinary, precious breath I take.

I mourn. But the sadness brings a gift. His memory is what makes this grief bearable and his legacy will help me grope through the sorrows yet to come. I proclaim that I was blessed in meeting one truly unique man—I knew him, admired him and, finally, I loved him. I can only hope that I will become better than I am, and so be worthy of all he has given me. W

Denny O'Neil is a group editor at DC Comics and heads up the Batman line of books.

BULL PEN

Greetings, Pat McCallum, Synthozoid-in-Chief here. If I seem uncharacteristically perky for an emotionless android, well, I've had a few. Anyway, by borrowing that rat-bastard Kang's time machine, allow me to transport you back in time to the second annual* *Wizard* Halloween costume party.

Just sit back, gawk at the photos, giggle a bit, wonder how any of us got dates and, when you're done, have a happy holiday and a groovy New Year. ¡*Adios*!

!! PAR-TAY! !!

"Second-string Avengers...assemble!" (l. to r.): Dean "Wonder Man" Galgano, Matt "Ant-Man" Green, Brian "Hawkeye" Cunningham, Pat "Vision" McCallum, Arlene "Mantis" So, Mike "Quicksilver" Fasolo, Andrew "Yellowjacket" Kardon and Allison "Wasp" Thau.

Phil "Mole Man" Colligan

Matt "Flaming Carrot" Tierney and Liz "Jubilee" Almond

Dave "J. Jonah Jameson" Anderson

Buddy "Grendel Prime" and Janet "Supergirl" Scalera

Bob "Jason (of G-Force)" Marshall

Foosball, anyone?

*FOR LAST YEAR'S COSTUMED HI-JINKS, SEE *TALES OF WIZARD: THE GUIDE TO COMICS* #53! —THE EDITORS

WIZARD TOP TEN

Top 10 things overheard at the second annual *Wizard* superhero Halloween party

10. "You smell smoke?"
9. "That's like, what, the fourth time the Vision's tried walking through the wall?"
8. "Somebody stop him—he thinks he's in the bathroom!"
7. "Where's Hawkeye's pants?"
6. "Hey...you're a guy!!"
5. "I don't remember the Avengers being so...wide."
4. "I don't think this is going to come out."
3. "So *that's* why they call you Ant-Man."
2. "He didn't *look* flammable."
1. "I'm sorry, officer."

CONTEST WINNERS

WILDSTORM, ISSUE #59: John Salleza, San Diego, Calif.
SCUD, #60: Ruben Martinez, Maywood, Calif.
ASTRO CITY, #61: Sara Henley, Los Angeles, Calif.
HELIX, #61: Philip G. Smith, Brighton, Mass.
(The *Wizard* logo appeared in *Cyberella* #2!)

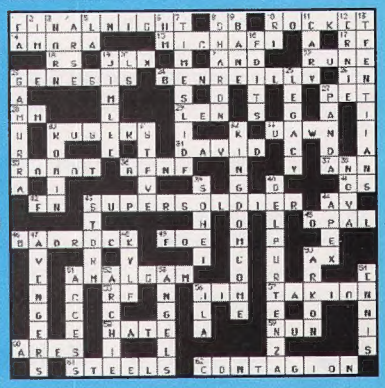
C.B.I.Q. answers...

from page 256

1. B	5. C	9. B	13. D	18. B
2. B	6. C	10. A	15. C	19. C
3. C	7. A	11. B	16. D	20. A
4. C	8. B	12. C	17. A	

CROSSWORD answers...

from page 257



WIZARD profile

Here's looking at...

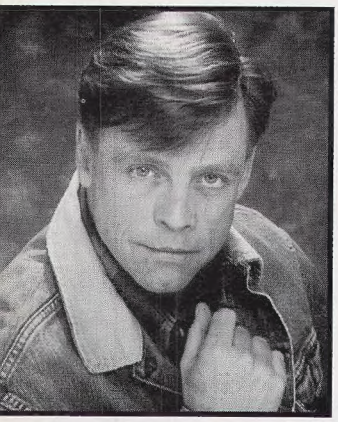
MARK HAMILL

As the middle child of seven kids, Mark Hamill had to deal with a lot of hand-me-downs. However, the star of "Star Wars" recalls that when it came to comic books, the leftovers were first-class pickings.

"I got everything from *Uncle Scrooge* to *Classics Illustrated* to my older brother's horror comics," recalls the 45-year-old Hamill of his comics upbringing. "I remember being surprised at one point when I discovered Superman comics. Up until that point, I thought Superman was just a television show."

Hamill, who describes himself as "more of a comic book historian than a regular reader," grew up on comics and Sunday funnies, but had little interest in either of these as a career. "I never thought of comics as a job, but I would doodle. Girls gave me a lot of attention because I could draw cartoon versions of The Beatles."

Hamill turned comic pro earlier this year when the idea of a superhero stumbling through a media-crazed real world found a home at Dark Horse Comics under the guise of *The Black Pearl*. The five-part series debuted in September and features a Hamill storyline, co-written by Eric Johnson with art courtesy of H.M. Baker. It centers on regular guy Luther, who, after saving an abducted woman, is quickly turned into a vigilante hero thanks to the media. What they don't know, however, is that Luther was originally stalking this woman, and now he's stuck in a role he shouldn't be in.



"*The Black Pearl* was originally written as a screenplay," relates Hamill. "When it became a comic, I thought we'd just [use] the screenplay. But we ended up tearing the screenplay apart and building the story back up from scratch. It was a lot of work. I'll never look at comic books the same way again."

Hamill, contrary to media reports, has no problems taking a look back at "Star Wars" for the umpteenth time, though. He describes the first film "as a pure fairy tale" and the second as "deeper, more cerebral and more challenging." It's the final film in the trilogy that Hamill has a problem with.

"I was set up the wrong way in the third film," he says. "I thought that Luke was being set up to go over to the Dark Side and that there would be the enticing set-up of whether he could kill Han or the Princess. But when I read the script, it all seemed awfully pat. I was disappointed in the third film and told George [Lucas] about it. He told me that 'Star Wars' was a fairy tale and that fairy tales are always tied up in neat packages."

Hamill has ultimately had the opportunity to stretch as an actor, thanks to his voice work as The Joker on "Batman: The Animated Series," the Hobgoblin on the "Spider-Man" animated series and Gargoyle on the new "Hulk" animated series, as well as playing The Trickster on the live-action "Flash" TV show. And he relishes those post-"Star Wars" triumphs.

"Luke ultimately went through the most changes in the three films. But I'd always hoped for the chance to turn him into some kind of exotic monster or scene-chewing villain. I'm jazzed to be getting those opportunities now."

First comic read...

The first ones that really made an impression on me were the *Mad* paperback collections.

Favorite comic of all time...

I loved the early *Dennis the Menace*. For me, Dennis was the Bart Simpson of the day.

Favorite work of your own...

I have a real fondness for "The Texas Wheelers" TV show and I loved playing The Trickster on "The Flash."

Comics you read...

I don't. The last time I regularly bought comics was 10 years ago, during The *Dark Knight Returns*/*Watchmen* period.

The one person you'd like to meet...

There's two. Stan Laurel and Alfred Hitchcock.

Superpower you would most want...

Flight. Peter Pan had a big impact on me.

Favorite munchie at 2 a.m....

Frosted Cheerios

Favorite toy as a kid and as an adult...

As a kid, a frisbee. As an adult, my satellite dish.

Things you collect...

Comic books, model kits and cereal boxes. I'm a cereal fanatic, but I'm not about to pay $700 for a Snagglepuss Cocoa Krispies box.

Person who would play you in a movie...

Pauly Shore or Michael J. Fox

Favorite cartoons...

"Rocky and Bullwinkle" and "George of the Jungle"

Person you would most like to work with...

Ray Harryhausen (a pioneer in stop-motion special effects)

Favorite musical performers...

R.E.M. and Pearl Jam. I'm at the point where I'm listening to my kids' music.

Favorite TV show...

"The Simpsons"

Last good movie you saw...

"The Usual Suspects"

Last good book you read...

Outrage, by Vincent Bugliosi

If you had the power of The Beyonder...

I'd want the power to mellow people out. W

by Marc Shapiro

Untap all creatures that attacked this turn. You may declare an additional attack during your main phase this turn.

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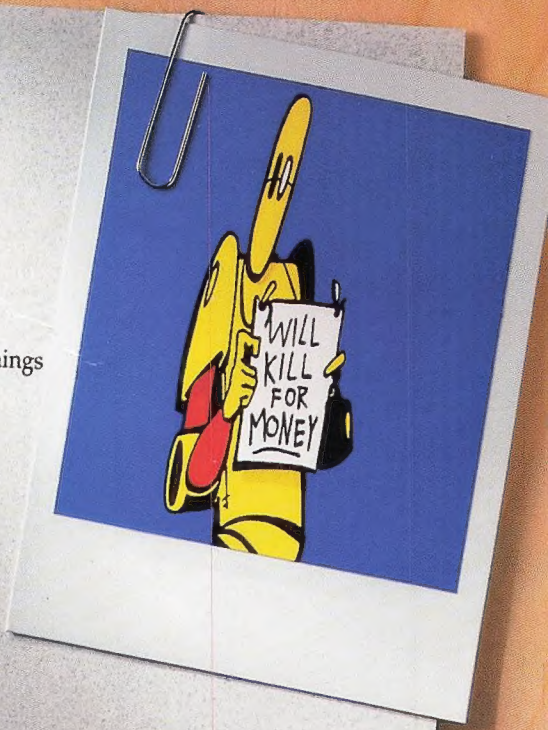

Objective: A full-time position shooting things

Education: Shooting things

Work Experience:
- Shooting zombies
- Shooting robots
- Shooting mutants
- Shooting mafia crime bosses
- Shooting mannequins
- Shooting cult leaders

Special Skills:
- Shooting things with D-pad
- Shooting things with gun
- Shooting things with D-pad and gun
- Shooting things with D-pad and partner
- Shooting things with gun and partner
- Shooting things with gun in each hand

Interests: Guns, ammo, shooting things

References:
- Don Cortese: Deceased
- Chuck Brown: Deceased
- Barry Polipooey: Deceased

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